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Department of
Agriculture

Forest Service

Rocky Mountain
Region

Record of Decision for the Land and Resource Management Plan - 2002 Revision



White River National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan 2002 Revision

Final Environmental Impact Statement

Record of Decision

WHITE RIVER NATIONAL FOREST

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Colorado counties include: Eagle, Garfield, Gunnison, Mesa,
Moffat, Pitkin, Rio Blanco, Routt, and Summit

This document presents the decision regarding the selection of a Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for the White River National Forest. It summarizes the reasons for choosing the Selected Alternative as the basis for the Revised Forest Plan, which will be followed for the next 10 to 15 years. The long-term environmental consequences contained in the Final Environmental Impact Statement are considered in this decision.

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Explanation of Acreages and Data Sources

The information in the tables, figures and maps in the following document was generated from a variety of sources, including several different Geographical Information System (GIS) software platforms, tabular databases, and data from a variety of models used in planning analysis. The acreage figures from the various sources do not match exactly in all cases. However, when added, acres of National Forest System lands (regardless of the source) are within acceptable margins of error.

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SUMMARY OF THE DECISION

The Decision: This decision approves Alternative K in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) as the 2002 Revised Land and Resource Management Plan (Revised Forest Plan) for the White River National Forest. Alternative K, with modifications¹, describes in detail the goals and objectives, standards and guidelines, management area direction, lands suitable for timber and other activities, monitoring and evaluation requirements, and recommendations for wilderness and other special areas.

I chose Alternative K because it provides a wide variety of recreation opportunities and forest uses while promoting ecosystem health. I based my decision on three types of information – scientific and technical analyses, the views of the public and our stakeholders, and legal mandates and policy direction. Taken together this information and knowledge supports Alternative K as the appropriate strategic guidance for the White River National Forest. Alternative K is the logical outgrowth of the alternative development and public involvement parts of the forest plan revision process. Alternative K responds to a variety of concerns by retaining many past opportunities and uses managed within an ecological and social framework. I am selecting Alternative K because it positions the Forest well to continue to provide recreational services, forest products, and intrinsic values. This alternative will honor our commitment to provide options for future generations.

This Revised Forest Plan and FEIS are programmatic and represent a broad management strategy for the White River National Forest. The Revised Forest Plan does not include site-specific decisions. Rather it provides overall systematic guidance and establishes management direction to govern future actions. Needed course correction or adjustments will be identified through monitoring, and amendments to this Plan will be made as circumstances warrant. This decision will remain in effect until the Plan is revised according to applicable National Forest Management Act (NFMA) regulations.

Draft, site-specific, travel management plans accompanied each alternative presented in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). In order to improve on the ground inventories and enhance public dialogue on the future of the transportation system on the Forest, the site-specific travel plan has been separated from the forest plan revision process.² Travel management direction in the Revised Forest Plan is programmatic and focuses on a variety of opportunities to use public lands. Additional planning activities leading to a site-specific travel management plan will be initiated as soon as practicable. I am expecting a Travel Order to be completed in the near future to make some necessary changes to the travel system so that certain roads and trails are managed to be compatible with management area direction in the Revised Forest Plan.

The balance in Alternative K is responsive to public issues and provides a wide range of outcomes and outputs. I do feel that Alternative K sets a reasonable course that will satisfy

¹ Modifications include minor adjustments to the ski area boundaries found in ROD Figures 2 and 3, boundary adjustments to the Freeman Creek recommended wilderness described under the Congressional Recommendations sections of this document, and terms and conditions associated with the Biological Opinion listed under Findings Required by Other Laws.

²The FEIS does not include the analysis displayed in the draft that relied on site-specific data on the future of the transportation system.

most people while providing them future opportunities to participate in Plan implementation.

KEY FEATURES OF THE WHITE RIVER NATIONAL FOREST

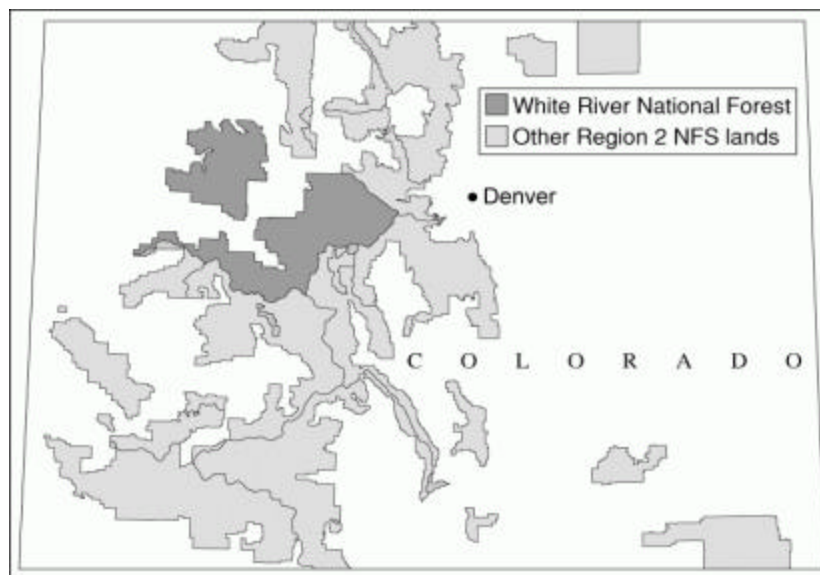
Few places in the United States feature as much topographic relief as the region of the White River National Forest. Its majestic mountain ranges attract visitors from throughout the world for sightseeing, skiing and backcountry recreation. The Forest rises from an elevation of about 5,800 feet in Glenwood Canyon, to the summits of ten peaks higher than 14,000 feet. This wide range in elevation provides the White River National Forest with climate, soils, and plant and animal communities that are more diverse than those found in many other parts of the country.

The White River National Forest is one of the nation's largest and oldest national forests. Established in 1891 as the White River Plateau Timber Reserve, the Forest later incorporated several other reserves to reach its current size of 2,270,000 acres. The White River National Forest is located in north-central Colorado west of the Continental Divide (ROD Figure-1). The divide defines most of the Forest's eastern boundary, which is about 60 miles from Denver. Ready access to the Forest by residents of Denver and other Front Range communities is provided by Interstate 70, which enters the Forest at the Eisenhower Memorial Tunnel.

In terms of visitor recreation days, the White River National Forest ranked fifth in the nation in 1995. Best known for its world-famous ski areas such as Aspen, Vail, and Breckenridge, the Forest also features the beauty and solitude to be found in some 750,000 acres of wilderness, outstanding scenic vistas such as Hanging Lake and the Maroon Bells, and the nation's largest herd of elk. Other key Forest attractions are the many stream and rivers which provide opportunities to rafters, kayakers and anglers.

ROD Figure – 1

Location of the White River National Forest in Colorado



Communities adjacent to the White River National Forest include Aspen, Avon, Basalt, Breckenridge, Carbondale, Dillon, Eagle, Edwards, Frisco, Glenwood Springs, Gypsum, Meeker, Minturn, New Castle, Rifle, Silt, Silverthorne and Vail. In recent years, some of the highest growth rates in Colorado have been seen in parts of the Forest's primary five-county planning area. Most of this growth has occurred near the Forest's ski areas. In the 1990s, these ski areas evolved into four-season resorts that attract visitors throughout the year. This change greatly boosted employment in the tourism and commercial sectors of local economies. During the same decade a strong national economy, baby-boom demographics and mainstream technology that permits many to work away from their offices combined to create a high demand for second homes and other private land development. These factors and others led to rapid population growth throughout the White River area.

Outdoor recreation, including both summer and winter activities, is the primary use of the White River National Forest. In 1997, the Forest recorded more than 8.8 million recreation visitor days (RVDs)³. The Forest provides 13% of the nation's downhill skiing. About 44% of the total Forest RVDs are in dispersed areas⁴. Demand is projected to increase for trails and scenic resources that provide opportunities for hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, mountain biking, all-terrain vehicle and snowmobile use, sightseeing and pleasure driving. Use of all developed facilities⁵ on the Forest, not including ski areas, is projected to be at 90% of practical capacity by 2020. Some individual facilities are already exceeding practical capacity.

THE PLANNING PROCESS AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public comments were critically important to me in shaping a responsible plan for the Forest that best meets the Forest Service mission, the goals of the NFMA and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the interests of the American public..

Preliminary work on the revision of the 1984 Forest Plan began in 1994. Formal inventories of the Forest's natural and environmental resources were begun using many improved scientific methods and data processing techniques that were unavailable during the development of the 1984 plan.

In 1996, the Forest Supervisor published a Monitoring & Evaluation Five-Year Report that reviewed the status of National Forest System (NFS) lands administered by the White River National Forest. This report concluded that conditions and public demands had changed significantly since inception of the 1984 Forest Plan and that the need for a revision existed.

The Forest Supervisor then solicited public comments on what the plan revision process should consider. After a series of open houses and extensive media coverage, the White River National Forest received hundreds of comments, not only from local residents but also from people nationwide. Issues brought up by the public and by other agencies were examined by an interdisciplinary team of planners and resource specialists brought together by the Forest to organize the planning process.

³ One RVD is equal to 12 hours of continuous use by one or more persons engaged in any recreational activity.

⁴ Dispersed recreation areas are areas without developed recreation facilities such as ski lifts, campgrounds or picnic areas.

⁵ Developed recreation includes all activities that take place on developed recreation sites, which have constructed facilities.

An Identification of Purpose and Need document, issued in August 1996, summarized how public comments and monitoring and evaluation efforts were used to determine what areas of the existing plan were most in need of revision. After extensive review, the interdisciplinary team identified six areas, called *revision topics*, on which to focus the planning process: 1) biological diversity, 2) travel management, 3) recreation management, 4) roadless areas, 5) special areas, and 6) timber suitability and allowable sale quantity. These broad categories incorporate many different specific issues. Other topics germane to Forest management are addressed through the Forest Service directive system.

In July 1997, the Forest released the Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS), which assessed the ability of the Forest to supply goods and services in response to the public's demand for them and discussed the need to establish or change management direction in response. The AMS provided a foundation for developing a broad range of reasonable alternatives to the existing plan. Also in the summer of 1997, the six revision topics were presented to the public in a series of 10 open houses held in Aspen, Avon, Carbondale, Denver, Eagle, Frisco, Glenwood Springs, Grand Junction, Meeker and Rifle. At the open houses, and through media disclosures, forest managers solicited comments from the public.

After completing the AMS, and incorporating public comment and improved resource information, forest planners formulated a preliminary array of forest management subfactors that expanded upon the six revision topics.

By July 1998, six alternative management schemes had been developed. By design, each alternative represented a potential forest plan that met all legal and administrative requirements and that, if selected, could be implemented. The next step in the forest plan revision process was to evaluate the environmental consequences of the implementation of the alternatives. For each forest resource, specialists described the existing condition and discussed how implementation of the various alternatives would affect the resource.

The DEIS and the Proposed Revised Forest Plan were made available for public comment on August 6, 1999. Based on public and Congressional requests, the original 90-day comment period was extended by 180 days to May 9, 2000. Over 14,000 individual responses were received from the public; city, county, state and federal officials; public interest organizations and private businesses⁶.

Between the issuance of the DEIS and the completion of the FEIS, the Forest held several meetings to consult with the three Confederated Ute tribes and ensure American Indian rights and interests were adequately accounted for in the planning process. Additionally, stakeholder meetings were held with six different groups of people representing different interests, including local government. These meetings were held to help validate and corroborate the public comment drawn from the DEIS and to aid in identifying factors and attributes of the forest plan decision that might be most important to the public.

After considering public comments⁷ on the Proposed Revised Forest Plan and DEIS, the interdisciplinary team made necessary changes as they developed the FEIS. Alternative K was crafted for consideration during the preparation of the FEIS in response to public comments received on the Proposed Revised Forest Plan and DEIS and to incorporate new

⁶ A summary of the public comments on the DEIS is available on the website: www.fs.fed.us/r2/whiteriver/planning.html.

⁷ A detailed review of public comment and agency responses is presented in Appendix A of the Revised Forest Plan FEIS.

Forest Service policies, for example, Canada lynx management direction. The seven alternatives (initial six plus K) are analyzed in detail in the FEIS.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The alternatives reflect a range of concerns and issues raised by the public and prescribed by law, regulation or policy. Each alternative was designed around a theme for management that achieves the purpose and need for revision and responds to the revision topics. All alternatives include the concepts of multiple-use, sustained yield, and ecosystem management while meeting the management requirements of NFMA [36 CFR 219], as well as other legal and regulatory requirements. Additionally, management of the White River National Forest will meet objectives established in the 1992 Rocky Mountain Regional Guide (USDA Forest Service, 1992). I recognize that the Regional Guide was withdrawn effective February 1, 2002 (Federal Register Vol.67, No. 25, February 6, 2002); however, the objectives remain appropriate and valid. These objectives are:

- Protect the basic soil, air, and water resources;
- Provide for multiple uses and sustainability in an environmentally acceptable manner;
- Provide for a variety of life through management of ecosystems;
- Provide for scenic quality and a range of recreation opportunities that respond to customers and local communities;
- Emphasize cooperation with individuals, organizations, and other agencies in coordination of planning and project application;
- In cooperation with other landowners, strive for improved land ownership and access patterns to the mutual benefit of both public and private landowners; and
- Improve the financial efficiency of all programs and projects.

In meeting these objectives, each alternative applies a set of forest-wide standards and guidelines ensuring basic resource protection, provision of services, and compliance with applicable laws. Individual management area (MA) direction is constant across all alternatives. Where alternatives differ most significantly is in the allocation of land to specific management areas and specific uses, acres and areas of recommended wilderness, designation of Research Natural Areas (RNA) and other Special Interest Areas (SIA), and of suitable range and timberlands (Chapter 2, FEIS).

DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED IN DETAIL

In making my decision, I have considered the seven alternatives described in detail in Chapter Two of the FEIS. The following are summary descriptions of each alternative, including the theme statement and other information showing how major revision topics were addressed. In order to present the summary information clearly, some of the revision topics are summarized qualitatively. Other revision topics are summarized quantitatively in ROD Tables 1 through 5 at the end of this section.

The revision topics represent the significant issues examined in this Revised Forest Plan. The alternatives address the revision topics in a variety of ways. The topics are:

- Biological Diversity
- Travel Management
- Recreation Management
- Roadless Areas
- Special Areas
- Timber Suitability and Allowable Sale Quantity

ALTERNATIVE THEMES

Alternative B (No Action Alternative)

Theme. Alternative B emphasizes production of goods and services such as developed recreation, downhill skiing, and range, all of which would be increased to meet expected levels of demand. This alternative continues existing land allocations. Vegetation management would be applied to improving wildlife habitat, maintaining and improving visual quality in travel corridors and recreation areas, treating of overmature and diseased tree stands, and providing firewood and other wood products.

Alternative C

Theme. Alternative C provides a range of recreation opportunities in balance with biological diversity considerations. The range of recreation that is provided is determined by projected demand and analysis of trends. Ecological constraints may limit recreation activities in some locations of the Forest. Vegetation management activities focus on producing healthier and more diverse vegetation conditions. This alternative emphasizes resource production in areas that have been previously managed as such. No new roads would be built in areas that have not been previously developed.

Alternative D (Preferred Alternative in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement)

Theme. Alternative D emphasizes active management of all habitat types, including the use of such tools as timber harvesting, prescribed fire, and structural improvements. It represents an aggressive approach to habitat management and places less emphasis on letting natural processes run their course. This alternative employs active management to make the most rapid progress, compared to other alternatives, toward a diverse, healthy ecosystem condition. Of all the alternatives, Alternative D places the least emphasis on development for human uses or recreation.

- Alternative E** **Theme.** Alternative E emphasizes recreation activities and amenities that provide economic benefits to local communities. Land allocations help provide opportunities to recreation-based businesses and support the improvement of developed recreation infrastructure. The following commercial uses are favored: ski areas, outfitting and guide services, tour operators, non-ski area resorts, and developed recreation infrastructure. Non-commercial recreation that provides significant economic benefits is emphasized in this alternative. Examples include consumptive wildlife activities such as hunting and fishing as well as other activities such as hiking and bicycling. Economically important recreation would be supported while maintaining or improving the health of forest ecosystems. A limited degree of resource production will occur under this alternative.
- Alternative F** **Theme.** The emphasis in Alternative F is on resource production activities, such as timber harvesting and domestic livestock grazing, while continuing to provide a range of recreational activities. In areas that are intensively managed for resource production, minimum population viability for all species is an ecological constraint. In other areas, natural processes are allowed to dominate the landscape. Dispersed and developed recreation opportunities will be at current levels or higher. Roaded recreation opportunities will expand. Semi-primitive recreation opportunities may decrease.
- Alternative I** **Theme.** Alternative I emphasizes natural disturbance regimes and other ecological and evolutionary processes occurring without human intervention. Commodity production, including recreation, is accommodated only to the extent that it does not fundamentally impair these natural processes, the restoration of ecological functions, or the health of native plant and animal communities. To the highest degree possible, the essential wildness of the land is maintained.
- Alternative K
(Selected
Alternative)** **Theme.** Alternative K sustains the capabilities of forest ecosystems while addressing social values and expectations, as well as managing for multiple resource outputs. Ecosystem components are actively managed to improve wildlife habitat, water quality and soil productivity. Management activities maintain or restore ecosystem structure, function and composition. Emphasis is placed on quality recreation experiences in a predominately natural setting. Recreation growth becomes more managed, while still allowing modest increases in use.

Alternative K addresses the revision topics in the following ways:

Biological Diversity. Natural processes are the primary factors shaping ecosystems in wilderness and roadless areas. Active management does occur in some areas to meet stewardship and restoration goals. Management activities focus on maintaining and restoring habitats for populations of terrestrial and aquatic species that have viability concerns on the Forest, as well as enhancing habitat for game species. Overall trends in watershed conditions improve due to restoration work.

Travel Management. Road reconstruction and road maintenance are emphasized over construction of new roads. The conversion of roads to trails, or full decommissioning of roads no longer needed to serve the forest or public, will be a priority. Although construction of some of new roads may occur, the utilization of temporary roads is stressed. All snow-free motorized and mechanized travel is limited to designated routes. For all recreation, loop systems will be emphasized to enhance recreational experiences.

Recreation Management. Summer motorized and winter non-motorized recreation opportunities are increased. Land allocation for ski areas addresses individual resort skier visit demands and expectations. Opportunities for new backcountry huts exist but may be limited. New developed recreation sites are limited in number. Existing developed sites may be expanded to provide concentrated recreational use. This alternative has the potential to moderately alter scenic resources.

Roadless Areas. Emphasis in this alternative is placed on balancing opportunities for active management with retention of the undeveloped character of roadless areas.

Special Areas. See ROD Table 4 - Total Acreage of Special Interest Areas Proposed by Alternatives, for a comparison of Special Area allocation by alternative.

Timber Suitability and Allowable Sale Quantity. See ROD Table 5 – Suitable Timber Lands and Timber Harvest for a comparison of suitable timber lands and ASQ by alternative.

SUMMARY COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVES

The following discussion provides some information that describes or compares alternatives. For a complete description of the alternatives, and a summary comparison of the topics, see FEIS Chapter 2. For a complete discussion of all comparative information for the alternatives, see FEIS Chapter 3.

Biological Diversity. The management of habitat for species of viability concern is addressed through forest-wide direction and does not vary by alternative. The alternatives do vary in management area allocations and these allocations differ in their approach to active management of vegetation composition and structure, the degree to which natural processes influence change on the Forest, the extent of improvement in watershed conditions, and the amount of habitat improvement projects.

Travel Management. Management area allocations vary among alternatives. Each management area allocation has an associated Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) classification. ROS describes the types of recreation expected in the management area including motorized, or non-motorized in both the winter and summer seasons. Most alternatives, including Alternative K, limit motorized and mechanized travel to designated routes. This programmatic direction will guide the site-specific travel management plan that will begin as soon as practicable after this ROD is implemented.

Recreation Management. The following table (ROD Table-1) compares the number of acres in each alternative allocated to present and potential future ski area activities. The table shows acres allocated to management area 8.25 – Ski Areas Existing and Potential.

ROD Table - 1
Acres Allocation to Winter Sports Areas by Alternative

	Alternatives						
	B	C	D	E	F	I	K
Acres in 8.25 MA	92,970	57,664	42,965	83,750	68,275	43,282	51,519

Roadless Areas and Recommended Wilderness. The following table shows, for each alternative, a summary of roadless area management. There are 640,000 inventoried roadless acres on the Forest. This inventory is shown on a map in the Forest Plan map packet. This inventory will become the White River roadless area inventory upon approval of this ROD.

The inventoried roadless areas do not vary by alternative. What does vary, however, is how those areas will be managed. The management of roadless areas can be summarized into the following three groups, and summarized in ROD Table - 2:

- Group 1 (Management Area Categories 1 and 2): Roadless areas in this group are managed to retain their roadless character through allocation to management areas that are generally non-motorized and undeveloped. There is little to no likelihood that any roads would ever be built in any of these management areas. Recommended wilderness (management area 1.2) is within this group. Road construction is not permitted within recommended wilderness.
- Group 2 (Management Area Categories 3 and 4): Roadless areas in this group will be managed for a variety of recreation uses and are likely to retain some undeveloped characteristics but also include some motorized opportunities. There is little likelihood that any roads will be built in any of these management areas.
- Group 3 (Management Areas Categories 5, 7 and 8): Roadless areas in this group have the most potential for intensive developments and the most potential for impact on the undeveloped character of roadless areas. The opportunity to build roads in roadless areas is greatest in these management areas. Any road construction in the roadless portion of these management areas, however, will undergo the appropriate NEPA analysis, and will meet all applicable regulation and policy direction. If it occurs, road construction in the roadless portion of these management areas is likely to be temporary road construction.

ROD Table - 2
Summary of Inventoried Roadless Acres in Management Area Groups by Alternative

Alternative	Roadless Acres	Group 1		Group 2 Acres	Group 3 Acres
		Recommended Wilderness Acres	Remaining Group 1 Acres		
B	640,000	0	34,100	264,700	340,800
C	640,000	94,000	164,200	131,800	249,500
D	640,000	47,000	116,500	50,000	426,300
E	640,000	107,000	93,300	323,500	115,900
F	640,000	0	51,000	54,100	534,500
I	640,000	200,000	245,800	77,700	16,200
K	640,000	82,000	122,500	67,600	367,600

There are 298,000 acres capable of and available for wilderness recommendations. The following table (ROD Table - 3) illustrates the number of acres that are allocated to 1.2 management area – Recommended Wilderness, by alternative. It also shows how many individual areas, both adjacent to existing wilderness and independent areas, and the percent of the 298,000 acres that are given the 1.2 management area allocation.

ROD Table - 3
Acres Allocated to Wilderness Recommendations by Alternative

	Alternatives						
	B	C	D	E	F	I	K
Acres of recommended wilderness	0	94,000	47,000	107,000	0	200,000	82,000
Number of adjacent areas	0	9	3	0	0	22	13
Number of independent areas	0	1	2	6	0	4	3
Percent of capable and available roadless areas recommended for wilderness (% of 298,000 acres)	0%	32%	16%	35%	0%	69%	28%

Special Areas. Alternatives differ in the number of special interest areas allocated. There are two groups of special areas: management area 2.1 – special interest areas, minimal use and interpretation and management areas 3.1 – special interest areas, emphasis on use and interpretation. These management areas allocations are summarized in ROD Table - 4.

ROD Table - 4**Total Acreage of Special Interest Areas Proposed by Alternatives**

	Alternative						
	B	C	D	E	F	I	K
Total 2.1 acres	0	9,140	30,740	6,030	2,600	17,200	24,260
Total 3.1 acres	0	14,910	0	15,480	0	1,780	3,870

Timber Suitability and Allowable Sale Quantity. Timber harvest is presented in several ways in the FEIS. To summarize, the key comparisons are listed in ROD Table -5.

Suitable timber lands are those lands that are to be managed, on a regulated basis, for timber harvest activities. The following table illustrates allowable sale quantity (ASQ)⁸ for each alternative. This calculation is independent of budget constraints. Timber Program Sale Quantity (TPSQ)⁹ is also shown in the table. TPSQ calculations reflect a reasonable expectation of timber harvest activities on suited timber lands that is based on an expectation that Forest budgets to support such activities will continue at recent levels.

ROD Table - 5**Acres of Suitable Timber Lands and Average Annual Harvest Amounts**

	Alternative						
	B	C	D	E	F	I	K
Suitable timber land acres	362,000	291,000	444,000	119,000	599,000	91,000	425,000
ASQ in million cubic feet per year	6.4	5.4	8.6	2.6	10.9	1.8	7.4
ASQ in million board feet per year	28.1	23.7	37.7	11.5	47.3	7.9	32.5
TPSQ in million cubic feet per year	3.3	1.3	2.5	1.2	5.2	1.4	2.8
TPSQ in million board feet per year	14.4	5.5	10.8	5.4	22.3	6.4	12.4

⁸ Allowable sale quantity (ASQ) - The quantity of timber that may be sold, from the area of suitable land covered by the Forest Plan, for a time period specified by the Plan.

⁹ Timber Program Sale Quantity (TPSQ) - The volume of timber planned for sale during the first decade of the planning horizon. Expressed as the average for the first decade.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED FROM DETAILED STUDY

Federal agencies are required by the NEPA to rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives, and briefly discuss the reasons for eliminating any alternatives that were not developed in detail [40 CFR 1502.14].

Many ideas have been suggested and evaluated during the development of the current alternatives considered in detail (Appendix A, FEIS). Addressing all of the permutations would create an unmanageably large number of alternatives that would not be helpful to the decision maker or the public. In addition, some issues were determined to be outside the scope of the current plan revision process, were already represented by one or more of the alternatives considered in detail, or were determined to risk unnecessary environmental harm. A summary of alternatives not considered in detail can be found in Chapter 2 of the FEIS.

COMMENTS SUBMITTED BY THE PUBLIC

The draft Forest Plan generated an unprecedented volume of public comments. I recognize that this reflects the high importance that the public places on these lands and the opportunities they provide. It is important to recognize that the consideration of public comment is not a vote-counting process in which the outcome is determined by the majority opinion. The appropriateness, specificity and factual accuracy of comment content serves to provide the basis for modifications to planning documents and decisions. Further, those who respond do not constitute a random or representative public sample because they are self-selected, unlike scientifically designed surveys or polls. The Forest Service encourages all interested parties to submit comments as often as they wish.

Public responses are tracked, documented and analyzed using a process called *content analysis*. Content analysis systematically compiles, categorizes and captures the full range of public viewpoints and concerns regarding a planning project. This database provides a robust analytical tool for identification of public concerns and sorting of demographic and topic information. The interdisciplinary team used this tool in considering public comments¹⁰ on the Proposed Revised Forest Plan and DEIS, and to make necessary changes as they developed the FEIS.

I believe Alternative K reflects the integration of public comments and is a logical outgrowth of the alternative development and public involvement parts of the forest plan revision process. Throughout the public involvement process the Forest Service emphasized that the Selected Alternative would likely be a combination of aspects of two or more of the alternatives presented in the DEIS. Alternative K incorporates ideas and management allocations from several alternatives presented in the DEIS. There are no elements or features of Alternative K that were not included or addressed in the range of alternatives presented in the DEIS.

¹⁰ A detailed review of public comment and agency responses are presented in Appendix A of the Revised Forest Plan FEIS.

The “Blended Alternative”. Colorado Congressman Scott McInnis provided the Forest Supervisor with a detailed comment on the Proposed White River Forest Plan. It has two main components, a set of written documents on specific issues and a management area map. The comment is described in these documents as the “Blended Alternative”¹¹. The interdisciplinary team examined and discussed components of the map and document. Some ideas and positions stated in the Blended Alternative were incorporated into the formulation of Alternative K. Some issues in the Blended Alternative write-up are not forest plan issues, or are better addressed elsewhere. In some instances, the Blended Alternative proposals were considered and incorporated in part or in a modified way in order to be responsive to other public concerns on similar issues. A full discussion of these issues is located in the Response to Comments, Appendix A of the FEIS.

Although the Blended Alternative was not included in the Alternatives Considered in Detail section, I believe the extent and scope of this comment warrants discussion in this ROD. The cover letter identified six primary issues: water, wildlife management, intermix, allowable ski area expansion, travel management, and wilderness. The comment also proposed statements of management intent, and in some cases, rewording of direction. The following is an assessment of how these issues were addressed in the final plan direction (Chapters 1, 2, and 3, Revised Forest Plan) and/or in Alternative K.

Water. The Blended Alternative proposes specific rewording of standards and guidelines for the management of water resources. This wording was not incorporated directly into the Revised Forest Plan. Because of the degree of concern and controversy, however, all water direction has been carefully re-examined. Updated water, aquatic and riparian direction can be found in Chapter 1 (Goal #1, Ecosystem Health), and Chapter 2 (Water and Riparian Resources) of the Revised Forest Plan.

Wildlife. Alternative K reflects an increase in winter range from the current 1984 Forest Plan, a concern raised in the Blended Alternative.

Intermix. The Blended Alternative applied the intermix prescription, an allocation that identifies areas where there are opportunities to address issues that cross many ownership boundaries. Alternative K also incorporates this prescription.

Ski Area Expansion. The Blended Alternative allows for expansion of ski areas in certain locations, notably Summit County. This idea is reflected in Alternative K, which allocates most additional 8.25 management areas to the ski resorts in Summit County with limited additions elsewhere.

Travel Management. The Blended Alternative included site-specific travel management recommendations, as the DEIS did include site-specific travel plans. However, at the request of many public groups and individuals, the travel plan has been separated and that planning effort will begin once the forest plan revision process is complete. The comments on individual roads and trails in the Blended Alternative and other letters will be taken into account in the travel planning process. The general travel concepts contained in the Blended Alternative were considered in the Revised Forest Plan. Areas of consistency with Alternative K include opportunities for looped trails and scenic byways.

¹¹ The full text of this comment can be found in the Government Letters, Appendix A, FEIS. The map is located in the map packet, which is available on the web site, CDROM, at Forest Service offices and local libraries.

Wilderness. Of the eight areas proposed for wilderness designation in the Blended Alternative, five of them are included in Alternative K. These areas are: Treasure Mountain, Ute Pass, Acorn Creek, North Independence and Hunter (Alternative K also recommends additional wilderness areas not included in the Blended Alternative). See Section 4 of the FEIS, recommended wilderness and roadless area management, for location and description of these areas.

Additional Themes. In addition to the six issues listed above, general themes in the Blended Alternative included: community and local support, multiple use opportunities, and general resource protection. These ideas were also identified in many other public comment letters. In response to the issue of community and local support, the Revised Forest Plan now includes an expanded discussion of public collaboration (Chapter 1, Goal #5, Revised Forest Plan).

REASONS FOR THE SELECTION OF ALTERNATIVE K

I believe the strategic guidance established under Alternative K provides the needed direction for the White River National Forest. Alternative K provides a balanced package of goals, objectives, land allocations, standards, guidelines, and monitoring. Because ecosystems are dynamic and conditions change, the flexibility and adaptability of this Plan is an important factor in my decision. Some more specific reasons for selecting Alternative K are listed below. Alternative K:

- Promotes ecosystem health and conservation through the mix of management area allocations, standards and guidelines.
- Provides multiple benefits to the public, and multiple resource outputs while ensuring the long-term health of the land.
- Provides for active management to improve wildlife habitat, water quality and soil productivity while maintaining and restoring ecosystem structure, function and composition.
- Provides for a high likelihood of maintaining or contributing to the maintenance of species viability.
- Places priority on reconstructing or maintaining existing roads, trails and facilities rather than constructing new ones.
- Provides quality recreation opportunities where they are needed most, improves the quality of existing recreation sites, and eliminates sites that cannot be managed efficiently.
- Provides for active management of vegetation for resource outputs and to meet stewardship objectives that is focused on areas where similar activities have occurred in the past.
- Identifies several existing vacant allotments for possible closure or partial closure, subject to a site-specific decision tiered to the Revised Forest Plan.
- Uses budget resources and manages public use resources carefully and strategically.

COMPONENTS & RATIONALE OF THE DECISION

There are six fundamental NFMA components of this decision. They are listed here and discussed in detail in the following sections:

1. Establishment of forest-wide multiple-use goals and objectives [36 CFR 219.11(b)].
2. Establishment of forest-wide management requirements (standards and guidelines) to fulfill the requirements of the NFMA relating to future activities [36 CFR 219.13 to 219.16].
3. Establishment of management area direction (management area prescriptions) applying to future management activities in that management area [36 CFR 219.11].
4. Designation of land suitable for timber production and the establishment of allowable timber sale quantity (ASQ). Designation of lands suitable for grazing and browsing. Identification of lands suitable and available for oil and gas leasing. Provision for a broad spectrum of forest and outdoor recreation opportunities [36 CFR 219.14 to 219.16, 219.20 and 219.21].
5. Establishment of monitoring and evaluation requirements [36 CFR 219.11(d)].
6. Congressional Recommendations for additions to the National Wilderness Preservation System [36 CFR 219.17] and additions to the Wild, Scenic and Recreational River System once suitability studies are complete.

Component 1: Establishment of Forest-wide Multiple-Use Goals and Objectives

The Goals and Objectives are listed and described in Chapter 1 of the Revised Forest Plan. They are based on the four goals identified in the 2000 Forest Service Government Performance Results Act (GPRA) Strategic Plan, but also include two forest-wide goals to address the important issues of working with and addressing a variety of public values, which were added in response to public concerns. They are goals 5 and 6, Public Collaboration and American Indian Rights and Interests.

I believe all of the Goals and Objectives listed in Chapter 2 of the Revised Forest Plan are important, and they are emphasized in the implementation of this Revised Forest Plan. Throughout the planning process, an emphasis has been placed on working collaboratively with federal, state and local governments, interest groups, and the public at large in achieving the goals and objectives of the Revised Forest Plan. The land allocations in Alternative K are structured towards the achievement of these Goals. The Goals listed here characterize the intent of this Plan and offer a focus for the future. It is important to note our focus is on outcomes, rather than outputs.

Goal 1 Ecosystem Health

The mix of management area allocations, standards, and guidelines in Alternative K meet the stated goal of promoting ecosystem health and conservation. Approximately one-third of the forest is wilderness and an additional one-third is allocated to prescriptions where natural disturbances are relied on to regulate ecosystem structure, function and process. On the remaining one third of the forest, natural disturbances are complemented by management activities designed to improve wildlife habitat, water quality, and soil productivity.

I find this approach to ecosystem health to be the most appropriate for lands on the White River National Forest.

NFMA requires that forest plans provide for a “diversity of plant and animal communities based on the suitability and capability of the specific land area in order to meet overall multiple-use objectives.” In accordance with this provision, the regulations require in part that “fish and wildlife habitat shall be managed to maintain viable populations of existing native and desired non-native vertebrate species in the planning area” (36 CFR 219.19).

Species-level viability assessments were conducted to identify the species of plants and animals for which there is a viability concern on the White River National Forest. Of approximately 350 species of plants and animals that were analyzed through our viability process, 11 plant species, 4 bird species, 4 mammal species, 6 fish species, and 2 amphibian species were identified as having viability concerns. Risk factors affecting viability for each species were identified, and specific management direction was developed to address those risks. Based upon a consideration of all the components of the Revised Forest Plan, I conclude that implementation of Alternative K will provide for a high likelihood of maintaining or contributing to the maintenance of species viability.

*Goal 2 Multiple
Benefits to
People*

Each of the alternatives provides for a variety of uses, products, and services for the present and into the future. They differ in how they balance the trade-offs between the provision of these goods and services, and sustaining the capability of ecosystems. Budget levels will continue to affect the provision of goods and services under all alternatives. A large share of the recreation budget would be allocated to the administration of recreational special uses in all alternatives.

Alternative K meets the stated goal of providing multiple benefits to the public, and providing multiple resource outputs while promoting ecosystem health and conservation. This alternative uses budget resources and manages public use resources carefully and strategically. An emphasis is placed on providing quality recreation opportunities where they are needed most, improving the quality of existing sites, and eliminating sites that cannot be managed efficiently, rather than dispersing use and developing new uses across the landscape. I believe this is a wise approach to building future recreation capacity on the Forest, one that responds to the social values and expectation of the public. Active management of vegetation for resource outputs and to meet stewardship objectives is also focused on areas where similar activities have occurred in the past.

*Goal 3 Scientific
and Technical
Assistance*

I believe use of the best scientific information available in managing the White River National Forest is vital to the successful implementation of this Plan. Our strategy is to make Forest Service information widely available using a variety of techniques for transferring information to the public, for example, using the internet to provide maps and other key information. Given its significance, the path we take and the emphasis placed on using and giving scientific and technical assistance does not vary by alternative.

**Goal 4 Effective
Public Service**

Alternative K places priority on reconstructing or maintaining existing roads, trails and facilities rather than constructing new ones, which is consistent with national policy. Furthermore, I believe this approach is the most fiscally responsible. It provides for opportunities to improve public service while focusing financial resources on their most efficient use. Providing the public with safe and cost-effective roads, trails, facilities, and operations will provide greater security for the public and employees while enhancing the White River National Forest's ability to meet other goals.

Improving the efficiency of management by conveying, exchanging, or purchasing lands where needed, and accurately surveying the Forest's boundaries, will take us further towards achievement of Goal 4. The amount of land boundaries surveyed and marked does not vary significantly by alternative

**Goal 5 Public
Collaboration**

Given the importance of public collaboration to the future sustainability of the White River National Forest and the surrounding communities, the achievement of the objective of Goal 5 would be the same in all alternatives.

It is important to note that Alternative K was created through a process that engaged the public, interested organizations, private landowners, state and local governments, and other federal agencies through a variety of venues and opportunities. The selection of Alternative K, reflects the importance I place on public input, and the numerous formal and informal conversations about the future of the White River National Forest that have occurred over the last several years. It is my hope that this decision will help turn those conversations into a lasting dialogue and provide an example of the kind of sound relationships needed to achieve the other goals of this Revised Forest Plan.

**Goal 6 American
Indian Rights
and Interests**

Redemption of the federal trust relationship and other responsibilities are a vital aspect of implementing this Revised Forest Plan and an important part of agency-wide policy. The White River National Forest will increase efforts to work in close coordination with tribal governments and others in the stewardship of forest lands. As part of this effort, the Forest will:

- Implement consultation protocols and other formal agreements between the White River National Forest and American Indian tribes;
- Provide opportunities for representatives from tribal governmental jurisdictions to participate in planning and management of NFS lands;
- Cooperatively work with tribal governments to address issues of common concern; and work to provide appropriate access to sacred, ceremonial, and traditional use sites.

As with public collaboration, redeeming our trust responsibilities and working with tribes would take place equally under all alternatives. The White River National Forest has worked closely in collaboration with the three Confederated Ute Tribes to develop the objectives and strategies underlying this goal. I am encouraged by the success of this effort and view it as an important first step towards the achievement of Goal 6. All alternatives were consistent in the development and maintenance of this working relationship.

Component 2: Establishment of Forest-wide Management Requirements

I am establishing the revised forest-wide standards and guidelines listed in Chapter 2 of the Revised Forest Plan. Alternative K provides direction that will sustain the capabilities of ecosystems, address social values and objectives, manage the land for multiple resource outputs, and provide an increase in diverse recreation opportunities with an emphasis on quality experiences in natural settings. Alternative K provides for active vegetation management to improve wildlife habitat, water quality and soil productivity, and reduce fire hazard, while maintaining and restoring ecosystem structure, function and composition.

This balance is achieved through the particular combination of goals and objectives, standards and guidelines and management area prescriptions in Alternative K. The forest-wide standards and guidelines listed in Chapter 2 of the Revised Forest Plan are required by 36 CFR 219.13 through 219.26 and 219.27. These standards and guidelines play a critical role in assuring the long-term health of the land. They provide direction for management and ensure that resources are managed in a sustainable manner. They represent design criteria to ensure that site-specific projects move the Forest towards desired outcomes expressed in the goals and objectives.

The standards and guidelines in the Revised Forest Plan incorporate important new direction for the future management of the White River National Forest including an emphasis on managing for biodiversity; maintaining a positive trend for plant and animal species of viability concern; combining management activities and natural processes to shape ecosystems; meeting the need for a growing amount of diverse recreation opportunities; and ensuring our commitments to American Indian rights and interests are met. For example, Forest plan direction requires motorized and mechanized vehicles to remain on roads and trails. This decision incorporates scientific findings, has general public support, and is responsive to emerging trends.

One of my objectives is to simplify the content of the Revised Forest Plan, so I have directed the Forest not to reprint all of the laws, regulations, policies, and Manual and Handbook direction. These rules still apply and are listed in Chapter 3 and Appendix A of the FEIS.

Component 3: Establishment of Management Area Direction

For all alternatives, management area direction composed of theme, description, desired condition, and standards and guidelines is consistent. The alternatives differ in how the management area designations are applied to the landscape, shown on the alternative maps¹². Each alternative map reflects the theme of the alternative as described in the FEIS.

The Forest will use management area allocations under Alternative K to implement the Revised Forest Plan. These are listed in Chapter 3 of the Revised Forest Plan. This direction will guide future management activities in each specific management area, and is required by 36 CFR 219.11(c). The mix of prescriptions and how they are applied are key factors in my decision.

¹² Maps can be found in Map Packet for the Revised Forest Plan and on the website www.fs.fed.us/r2/whiteriver/planning.html.

Relationship Between Alternative K and Management Area Prescriptions.

Management prescriptions are organized into eight major categories representing different levels of management intensity. Categories range from minimal to substantial human-caused changes. Within each category are different management area prescriptions that share a related management emphasis. Alternatives allocate land to categories and prescriptions depending on the emphasis of the alternative. The following table (ROD Table - 6) lists the management area categories for Alternative K and this decision, and gives examples of prescriptions in each.

ROD Table - 6

Acres Allocated per Management Category under Alternative K

Management Category		Acres ¹³	% of Forest
1	Wilderness, backcountry recreation with limited winter motorized use, eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers	995,600	44%
2	Special Interest Areas, Research Natural Areas	61,700	3%
3	Backcountry year-round motorized, corridors connecting core areas	85,300	4%
4	Scenery, Scenic Byways, high use dispersed recreation areas,	103,300	5%
5	General forest and rangeland, forest products, elk habitat, forested landscape linkages	1,127,900	50%
6	Not used in the Revised Forest Plan	N/A	N/A
7	Residential/ forest interface	7,800	<1%
8	Ski areas, developed recreation complexes, designated utility corridors	81,000	4%

The following section briefly describes the management categories, lists key management area prescriptions in each, and discusses the application of these key prescriptions under Alternative K. Please note that the following information does **not** discuss each management category nor every management prescription in it. The prescriptions described here are those that carried more weight in my decision to select Alternative K. The management areas not described here are described in full in Chapter 3 of the Revised Forest Plan. A complete comparison of acres in each management area, for each alternative, is presented in the FEIS in Chapter 2, Table 14 – Comparison of acres allocated to management areas in each alternative, and in the Summary of the FEIS.

Category 1
Wilderness,
recommended
wilderness, wild
rivers; non-
motorized
recreation; limited
winter motorized

There is approximately 44% of the Forest, or 995,600 acres, included in these prescriptions under Alternative K. This category includes management area prescriptions for Wilderness and eligible Wild Rivers.

Management Area 1.2 - Recommended Wilderness: By choosing Alternative K, I am recommending the designation of 12 additions to the existing wilderness areas and two independent areas for a total of 82,000 acres of recommended wilderness (ROD Table - 7).

¹³ All acreages have been rounded to the nearest hundred. In addition, it is important to note that some areas have overlapping management category prescriptions. Thus, they are “double counted” because they appear under multiple category headings. Percent of forest refers to the portion of the total forest acreage on which a given prescription applies.

This decision is based, in part, on the capability, availability and needs assessment in Appendix C of the FEIS, which identified a need for more wilderness to meet growing demand, and to give under-represented vegetation types the protection that wilderness designation would afford.

ROD Table - 7
Recommended Wilderness under Alternative K

No.*	Name	No.	Name
4	Ripple Creek Pass	6	Dome Peak
15a	Sweetwater	21b	Ute Pass
21c	Acorn Creek	28	Freeman Creek
29a	Spraddle Creek	48	Gypsum Creek
52	Woods Lake	53b	Red Table
64	Mormon Creek	69	Assignation
75	Hunter	77	North Independence "A"
84	Treasure Mountain	8a	Red Dirt

*These numbers key to the roadless map found in the map packet of the FEIS.

My decision is to manage these recommended wilderness areas to ensure retention of the characteristics for which they were recommended until Congress makes a decision regarding the future status of these lands.

Management Area 1.5 – Designated and Eligible Wild Rivers: These areas will be managed to protect and perpetuate eligible river segments. These wild river segments may or may not be located within designated wilderness.

The Revised Forest Plan has identified five rivers or streams as eligible for Wild and Scenic designation. These designations include sections in management areas 1.5 (Wild), 3.4 (Scenic), and 4.4 (Recreational) (ROD Table - 13). My decision is to manage these rivers or streams under a Wild and Scenic River management prescription until such time as a suitability analysis is completed. At that time the river segment will either be recommended to Congress for designation or it will be managed under the prescriptions of the lands adjacent to the area. Please note that eligibility will not affect the existing negotiated agreements with local water users.

This recommendation is a preliminary administrative recommendation that will receive further review and possible modification by the Chief of the Forest Service, Secretary of Agriculture, and the President of the United States. The Congress has reserved the authority to make final decisions on designation of rivers as part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

Category 2
Research Natural Areas; Minimal-use special interest areas

There is approximately 3% of the Forest, or 61,700 acres, included in these prescriptions. This category includes the prescription for the management of Research Natural Areas (RNA) and Special Interest Areas (SIA) designated for minimal use and interpretation.

Management Area 2.1 – Special Interest Areas - Minimal Use and

Interpretation: By applying this alternative, I am ensuring the special interest values of these areas are protected through management of use. The areas have been designated as botanical, geological, historical, paleontological, scenic, or zoological areas as well as for the protection and management of TES species, or other elements of biological diversity; or

for their emotional significance, scenic values, or public popularity¹⁴. In addition, places such as caves, hot springs, cultural resource sites, 14,000-foot peaks, significant views, and state-designated historic sites are protected.

Within these special interest areas, vegetation, terrestrial and aquatic habitat, soil productivity, and water quality will usually, but not always, appear natural (e.g., relatively pristine or pre-settlement). Vegetative management may be used to maintain or restore natural conditions, to protect TES species, or to protect other values for which the SIA was proposed or designated. Management implementation guidelines ensure protection of the values for which the area was proposed or designated.

The rare or outstanding values of the areas will be the primary consideration in their management. Other resource values and uses are secondary to the protection, maintenance, and restoration of an area's special values for public education, enjoyment, and study. The following table (ROD Table - 8) lists these areas.

ROD Table - 8
Special Interest Areas for Minimal Recreation Use and Interpretation under Alternative K

Area Name	Acres
Continental Divide Land Bridge	4,430
Dead Horse Creek	990
Main Elk Creek	4,680
Mitchell Creek	4,790
Porcupine	1,570
Quandary Peak	4,080
Serry Lake	2,520
Taylor Pass	860
Warren Lakes	340
Total Acres in MA 2.1	24,260

Management Area 2.2 – Research Natural Areas: I am selecting five individual areas for designation as RNAs in Alternative K (ROD Table - 9, FEIS, Appendix G). These are areas managed to protect or enhance exemplary ecosystems designated for non-manipulative research, education, and maintenance of biodiversity. They are representative of a range of vegetation types and topographic features that have not been heavily influenced by humans. Timber harvest is prohibited in these areas and there are some restrictions to livestock grazing. Limited development may occur in these areas and recreation use will continue with few restrictions. These areas are not included in the suitable timberland base.

Given the mix of areas recommended for wilderness designation, identified for non-motorized recreation, managed as special interest areas with an emphasis on minimal use, and public comment, I believe these RNAs combined with other RNAs in the region will ensure the availability of research and education opportunities into the future. Additionally, valuable high elevation ecosystems are represented without a high level of redundancy. Alternative K, like all other alternatives, recognizes Hoosier Ridge, the one existing RNA on the White River.

¹⁴ Special Interest Areas are described in the FEIS Appendix H, including the values for which the area was identified.

The Lower Battlement Mesa RNA covers an area on both the White River National Forest and the Grand Mesa National Forest. As follow-up to this decision, I expect the Grand Mesa/Uncompahgre/Gunnison (GMUG) National Forests to review their Forest Plan that covers this area and to consider an amendment to that Plan as appropriate to include RNA direction.

ROD Table - 9

Acres and Names of Research Natural Areas under Alternative K

Research Natural Area	Acres
Assignment Creek	4,000
Lower Battlement Mesa	*24,400
Main Elk Creek	2,800
Gift and Kline Creeks	11,100
East Lake Creek/West Cross Creek	10,800
Total acreage**	53,100

*Includes acreage on the adjacent Grand Mesa-Uncompahgre-Gunnison National Forests

** Does not include the 300 acres on the established Hoosier Ridge RNA.

Category 3
Motorized
recreation;
interpretive
special interest
areas; scenic
rivers

There is approximately 4% of the Forest, or 85,300 acres, included in these prescriptions. These prescriptions include Special Interest Areas, Backcountry, and eligible Scenic Rivers. My decision to select Alternative K is based on the inclusion of these areas and the role they play in the realization of Objectives and Desired Conditions for the Forest.

Management Area 3.1 - Special Interest Areas - Emphasis on Use or Interpretation¹⁵: These will be managed to protect or enhance areas with special characteristics. These areas have special plant, geologic, or historical characteristics and will play a significant role in the future of the Forest. By emphasizing use and interpretation in these areas, the Forest will recognize and manage use to protect the resources of special interest and consider future opportunities for interpretation (ROD Table - 10).

ROD Table - 10

Special Interest Areas for Recreation Use and Interpretation Under Alternative K

Name	Acres
Castle Creek and Ashcroft	100
Camp Hale	1,210
Coal Basin	1,020
Colorado Midland Railroad	1,190
Holy Cross City	170
Independence Pass	180
Total Acres in MA 3.1	3,870

Category 4
Dispersed
recreation; scenic;
recreational rivers

Approximately 4.5% of the Forest, or 103,300 acres, is included in these prescriptions. Allocations to these prescriptions are an important factor in my decision. These are lands where ecological processes are managed to be compatible with recreation use. These areas are the scenic backdrops for the nation's number one recreation activity, driving for

¹⁵ Special Interest Areas are described in the FEIS Appendix H, including the values for which the area was identified.

are the scenic backdrops for the nation's number one recreation activity: driving for pleasure and viewing scenery. Prescriptions in this category include Scenic Byways, scenic areas, vistas, or travel corridors. These areas are managed to protect or preserve the scenic and recreation values and uses of lands adjacent to Scenic Byways and railroads.

Category 5
*Wildlife habitats;
rangelands; forest
products*

These are areas managed to produce a mix of forage, forest products, and wildlife habitat, while maintaining scenic resources and offering recreation opportunities. Approximately 50% of the Forest, or 1,127,900 acres, is included in these prescriptions. Prescriptions in this category include wildlife habitats, rangelands, and forest products.

Management Area 5.13 – Resource Production - Forest Products: These lands will be managed to provide commercial wood products. In addition, they will provide for forage production, commercial products, scenic quality, diversity of wildlife, and a variety of other goods and services. Numerous open roads in these areas will provide commercial access and roaded recreational opportunities, while closed roads provide non-motorized opportunities.

Under the implementation of direction in Alternative K, it is important to note that both offered and sold volumes will be lower than the ASQ and, at the same time, are likely to exceed mill capacity by as much as 8%. This allows flexibility to meet changing future demands.

The desired condition of this management area prescription will be to maintain suitable forested areas with commercially valuable tree species at ages, densities, and sizes that allow growth rates and stand health conducive to providing a sustained yield of forest products. A full array of silvicultural systems will be used that will produce a range of successional stages from seedlings to late-successional stands. Priority will be given to converting overmature stands to young stands managed at acceptable site occupancy and rates of growth. In areas in which timber harvest is planned, this direction calls for shorter and more frequent rotation periods. Wildfires will generally be suppressed and insect and disease populations maintained at endemic levels to protect commercial forest products.

Management Area 5.42 – Bighorn Sheep Habitat: Management emphasis for this prescription will be to provide adequate amounts of quality forage, cover, escape terrain, and solitude for bighorn sheep and other species, while allowing vegetative manipulation that provides other multiple-use resources. With this allocation, I am choosing the alternative with the most area designated as bighorn sheep habitat. Alternative K will provide protection for all four of the priority herds identified by the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW), and the highest likelihood of maintaining the numbers and health of these herds by protective measures, and, in some areas, by pro-active management. Alternative K provides the most protection for bighorn sheep from disease from domestic sheep in the Gore herd and will result in fewer conflicts with domestic sheep grazing

These areas will provide habitat for established bighorn sheep herds on the Forest. To ensure bighorn sheep viability, maintaining and improving the habitat upon which bighorn sheep depend will be emphasized. Herd objectives will be established in cooperation with CDOW. Interpretive opportunities are provided in established viewing areas.

Management Area 5.5 – Forested Landscape Linkages: I am placing an emphasis on the importance of landscape linkages. Alternative K places the highest acreage in corridor designation of any alternative. The creation of habitat gaps heightens the risk that suitable habitats will become isolated from each other. Barriers to the movement of species from one suitable habitat patch to another reduce the connectivity of these habitats. When suitable vegetation types and cover conditions are present between patches, species can move between them. Corridors will provide areas for landscape-scale movement, migration, and dispersal of forest carnivores and other wide-ranging wildlife species; safe travel connections between large blocks of forested landscapes across the Forest; and security from intensive recreational and other human disturbances. This is an important step in providing for the maintenance of biodiversity across the forest. This prescription includes many of the aspects of two different management areas included in the Proposed Revised Forest Plan, Corridors Connecting Core Areas (3.55) and Forest Carnivores (5.45).

Category 6
Grasslands and related habitats

None of the Revised Forest Plan alternatives applied Category 6 prescriptions to lands within the White River National Forest. Category 6 is generally used for grassland and related habitats.

Category 7
Urban/wildland mix

These are areas where public lands are intermingled with private lands to such an extent that ecosystem management objectives for National Forest system (NFS) lands must be tempered by other landowner's uses and objectives. Less than 1% of the Forest, approximately 7,800 acres, is allocated to this category. The allocation in Alternative K is responsive to public comment.

Management Area 7.1 – Intermix: These areas are located along the borders of the Forest adjacent to other public and private lands. Many adjacent private lands are experiencing pressure from urban and private residential development. Numerous public comments related to the high level of importance people assign to managing intermix areas on the Forest. I believe coordinating federal actions with adjacent landowners will prove critical to the success of Forest Service land management in areas of the White River National Forest experiencing rapid growth and urbanization. Implementation of the National Fire Plan is one opportunity for such cooperative activities.

Cooperative relationships will be emphasized with other agencies, local governmental jurisdictions, and adjacent landowners. Opportunities will be sought for coordinated, multi-jurisdictional management approaches to address resource issues and impacts that transcend the national forest boundary. Management actions will be geared toward influencing the vegetation composition and structure to promote visual screening and to minimize hazardous fuel loading patterns.

Category 8
Ski areas and developed recreation sites; special uses

These are areas that feature special places for recreation activities with a variety of benefits for people and communities. In these areas, ecological conditions and natural processes are likely to be altered by human activities. There is approximately 3.5% of the Forest, or 81,000 acres, included in these prescriptions.

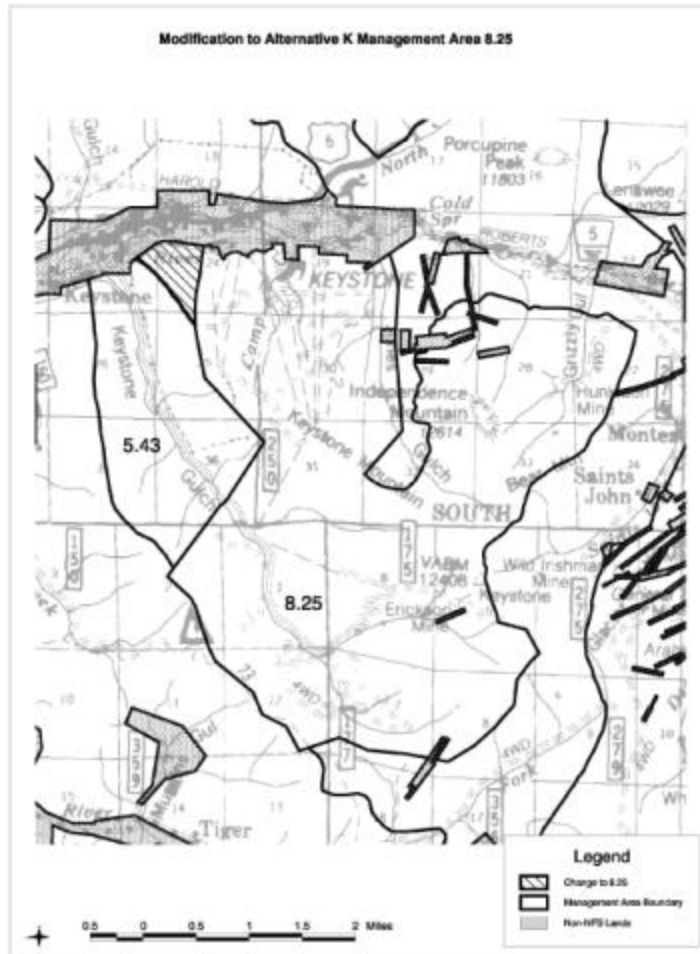
Management Area 8.25 Ski Areas, Existing and Potential: Alpine skiing and snowboarding are popular recreation activities on the Forest and an important part of Colorado's tourist economy. Increased levels of participation in skiing and snowboarding at White River National Forest resorts over the last ten years has primarily been the result of a rapidly increasing population within the state. Over the next ten years, participation levels in skiing and snowboarding are expected to continue to increase in response this trend. Future demand for skiing is expected to be highest at the four existing ski areas in Summit County, which are closest to the Denver-metro area and Front Range cities. The smallest increases in use are expected to occur in Pitkin County where limited increases in population growth are expected.

I have decided to allocate a sufficient number of acres for skiing and snowboarding to meet expected demand through the year 2010. Alternative K allocates a sufficient number of acres in Summit County and other locations that are most responsive to the effects of an increased population and demand. The mix of terrain allocated is intended to provide the types of terrain that best meet customer preferences and ability levels, and other qualitative or physical needs.

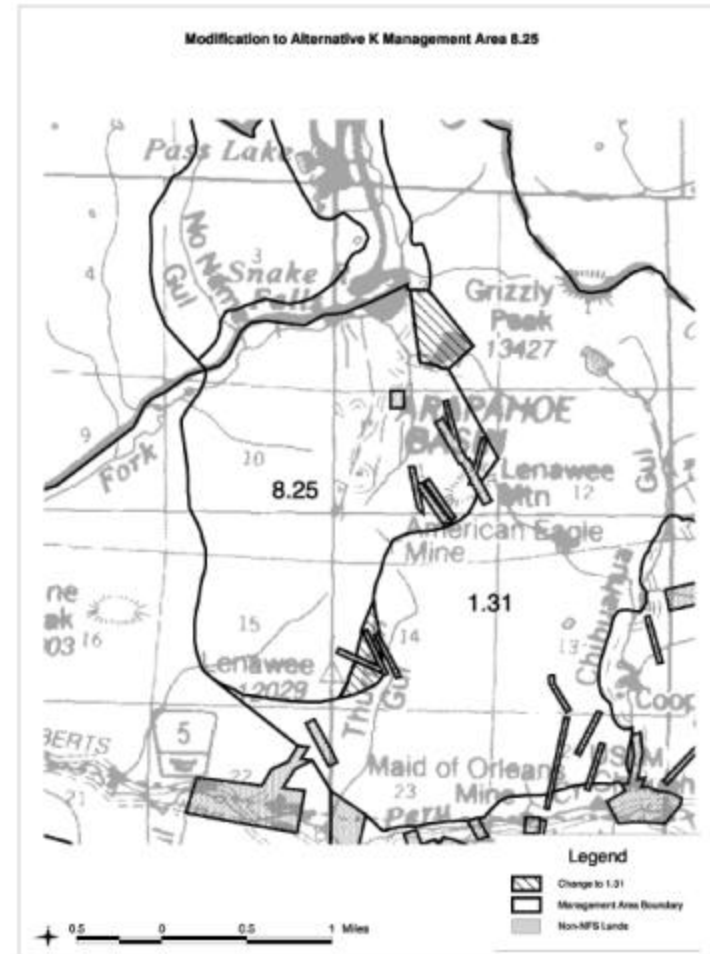
The planned allocations will allow the four ski areas in Summit County the opportunity to provide a higher quality experience by lowering skier densities. In Eagle County, adjustments are made in response to specific user needs, to balance terrain type with skier ability levels, and to protect natural resources. Several areas, with the potential for impacts to wildlife habitat, are removed from future consideration in this prescription. In Garfield and Pitkin Counties, the amount of terrain available is adequate to accommodate the expected number of skiers for the next 10 years. Some minor adjustments in ski area boundaries are being made in response to specific user needs.

This ROD makes two boundary allocation adjustments (from those outlined in Alternative K) for Keystone Ski Area and Arapahoe Basin Ski Areas (ROD Figures 2 & 3). These modified maps replace the management area 8.25 allocation on the Alternative K maps in the map packet and on the website.

ROD Figure-3
Keystone Ski Area



ROD Figure-2
Arapahoe Basin Ski Area



Component 4: Land Suited or Not Suited for Certain Activities

The decision I am making regarding the designation of lands suited or not suited for certain activities includes the designation of suitable timber lands and the establishment of an ASQ, designation of lands not suitable for grazing and browsing, the identification of lands suitable and available for oil and gas leasing, and the provision for a broad spectrum of outdoor recreation opportunities.

Suitable Timber Lands and Allowable Sale Quantity

I selected Alternative K, in part, because of the amount of suitable lands and level of goods it provides. Tables displaying the suitable land base are in the FEIS (Chapter 3, Timber Section) and meet requirements of 36 CFR 219.14, 219.16, 219.20, and 219.21.

Alternatives C, E, and I produce the lowest levels of timber harvest. Lands suitable for timber production and availability of wood products are limited in both Alternatives E and I. The theme for Alternative C does not allow for road building in inventoried roadless areas. This results in a low timber harvest level.

Alternative F produces the highest level of harvest. This alternative does not fully resolve concerns expressed by other revision topics and would result in development of many roadless areas on the Forest. Alternatives B and D move toward a balance between production of forest products and protecting other resource values. Suitable lands include lands previously harvested and some inventoried roadless areas.

Alternative K provides the balance I am seeking. Alternative K manages less acres of forest for timber than Alternative D, but provides a larger suitable timber base to draw from than Alternative B. It assures a sustainable and moderate level of timber harvest commensurate with past timber management on the Forest and guides harvest activities in an environmentally sound manner. This alternative also provides for maintenance of forest health through a variety of vegetation management practices such as timber harvest, prescribed burning, and livestock grazing.

My decision to select Alternative K and the accompanying suitable timberlands is based on consideration of public comment, the importance of biological diversity, and the ability of the Forest to produce a sustainable level of timber harvest. There are 425,000 acres of land suitable for timber management. The ASQ is 74 million cubic feet (325 million board feet) per decade. ASQ is a measure of the White River National Forest's capacity to produce a sustainable supply of timber on suitable timberlands given full timber program funding while adhering to resource protections represented by Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines. When the Forest incorporated experienced timber budget constraints to the ASQ calculations, the Timber Sale Program Quantity (TSPQ) for Alternative K is 28 million cubic feet (124 million board feet) per decade. I have decided to implement the TSPQ for Alternative K, which reflects harvest levels associated with experienced timber budgets.

Suitable Grazing Lands

Livestock grazing will continue on the White River National Forest. The standards and guidelines in Alternative K will improve unsatisfactory conditions on rangelands, maintain the quality of those in satisfactory conditions, and protect the Forest's valuable riparian areas and wetlands.

Alternative K emphasizes effective and efficient management of grazing allotments and considers some vacant allotments for closure. Urbanization, increases in property values, and the complexities of managing livestock in areas with high recreation use have led to a decline in the desirability and feasibility of some allotments for livestock production. Many of the adjacent ranches have been sold and subdivided. As a result, some allotments no longer support viable operations. Fifty-one allotments (31% of the total 163 allotments) currently lie vacant. Changes in the management of some allotments will be presented in a site-specific decision, tiered to the analysis done for the Revised Forest Plan FEIS. Retention of some grazing allotments, although currently vacant, allows for management flexibility.

*Lands Available
for Oil and Gas
Leasing*

I am affirming the decisions made in the ROD for the White River National Forest Oil and Gas Leasing EIS (May 26, 1993) with the changes described below. The changes to the 1993 Oil and Gas Leasing decisions are made to bring those decisions into compliance with the Revised Forest Plan. The changes are based on new management area prescription allocations.

The 1993 Oil and Gas Leasing ROD made two decisions: (1) lands administratively available for oil and gas leasing activities and (2) the specific lands authorized for leasing. These decisions include the lease terms and stipulations that have been determined necessary to protect the surface resources. This ROD adjusts those leasing decisions by reducing the lands available for leasing by approximately 90,700 acres. Specifically, lands recommended for wilderness, and found eligible for wild, scenic and recreational river designation are made administratively unavailable for oil and gas leasing.

Recommended Wilderness - There are 15 areas of recommended wilderness in Alternative K totaling approximately 82,000 acres. In the 1993 Oil and Gas Leasing ROD, 1,200 of these acres were designated administratively unavailable for oil and gas leasing activities. An additional 80,800 acres of recommended wilderness will be made administratively unavailable for oil and gas leasing activities by this ROD. All 82,000 acres of recommended wilderness, therefore, will be administratively unavailable. Each area of recommended wilderness was analyzed individually regarding its availability status. This information, be recommended wilderness, is presented in the Revised Forest Plan FEIS.

Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers - The following rivers were found to be eligible for wild, scenic, or recreational river designation in Alternative K: South Fork of the White River, Crystal River, Deep Creek, Colorado River, and Cross Creek. Cross Creek and small sections of South Fork of the White River and the Crystal River are located within wilderness and are therefore legally unavailable for leasing.

Outside of Wilderness, there are a 17,600 acres included in the eligible river segments. In the 1993 Oil and Gas Leasing ROD, 7,700 of these acres were designated administratively unavailable for oil and gas leasing activities. An additional 9,900 acres of eligible wild, scenic, and recreational rivers will be made administratively unavailable for oil and gas leasing activities by this ROD. All 17,600 acres of eligible river segments, therefore, will be administratively unavailable. For the revised Forest Plan, each river was analyzed individually regarding its availability status. This information, by river, is included in the Revised Forest Plan FEIS.

The changes in the forest-wide oil and gas leasing decision made by this ROD can be summarized as follows: 80,800 acres of recommended wilderness and 9,900 acres of eligible wild, scenic, and recreational rivers are designated administratively unavailable for oil and gas leasing activities. These two changes result in the addition of 90,700 acres to the category of lands administratively unavailable for oil and gas leasing.

Changes in the availability decision are available on maps that show the original 1993 Oil and Gas Leasing decisions, and the specific locations of each recommended wilderness area and river segment that are now designated administratively unavailable. These maps are available in the administrative record for the Revised Forest Plan located in the Supervisor's Office in Glenwood Springs, CO.

*Lands
Withdrawn from
Mineral Activity*

Locatable minerals are those valuable deposits subject to exploration and development under the General Mining Law of 1872 and its amendments. These resources commonly are referred to as "hardrock" minerals, and include gold, silver, molybdenum, iron, copper, zinc, lead, and alabaster. Within the White River National Forest, approximately 755,000 acres are designated wilderness, and are currently withdrawn from mineral activity. Alternative K identifies an additional 200,200 acres in management areas where other resource values will preclude mineral activity. These management areas are: recommended wilderness, wild, scenic, and recreational rivers, research natural areas, developed recreation complexes, and ski areas. Upon issuance of this ROD, the Forest Service will request that the BLM withdraw these lands from mineral entry. Upon withdrawal, there will be a total of approximately 955,200 acres withdrawn from mineral entry on the White River National Forest.

*Recreation
Opportunity
Spectrum*

Alternative K provides for a broad spectrum of outdoor recreation opportunities. The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) classes tie together factors such as setting, experience, and activities. Through these factors, ROS classes identify the suitability of an area for a variety of recreational opportunities. Opportunities that may be provided range from solitude and high personal challenge in the Pristine ROS class (on the most remote and undeveloped lands) through five classes of progressively more development, to highly developed experiences in the Urban ROS class (in areas immediately adjacent to communities). Forest-wide, emphasis is placed on semi-primitive non-motorized opportunities, followed, by primitive and semi-primitive motorized opportunities.

Component 5: Monitoring and Evaluation Activities

I am establishing a strategy, along with requirements, for monitoring and evaluating the implementation and effectiveness of the Revised Forest Plan and the validity of assumptions used in its preparation. Monitoring and evaluation direction is required by 36 CFR 219.11(d). It is my intent to invite the public and other agencies to participate in monitoring. A description of this monitoring strategy can be found in Chapter 4 of the Revised Forest Plan.

I believe effective monitoring and evaluation will foster improved management and more informed planning decisions. Monitoring and evaluation are learning tools that form the backbone of adaptive management. With these tools, data is collected and compiled to serve as reference points for the future. New scientific understanding and technology, changes in

law, policy, and resource conditions, growing concerns, trends, and changing societal values can all be incorporated into forest planning. In the development of the Revised Forest Plan, the monitoring focus has shifted from specific activities to broad programmatic requirements and connected activities. These broad requirements satisfy the regulatory provisions and are responsive to the Revised Forest Plan goals and objectives. Because the requirements are flexible and adaptable, they allow new knowledge and techniques to be easily incorporated into the monitoring plan.

The Monitoring and Evaluation Chapter in the Revised Forest Plan identifies the legally required monitoring activities; the action, effect, or resource to be measured; the monitoring schedule; and the level of precision or reliability. Also listed are additional monitoring activities to be conducted based on funding and personnel availability.

Component 6: Congressional Recommendations

In assigning management area delineations, I am making related decisions for special designations. In accordance with 36 CFR 219.17, I am making a recommendation to Congress that 82,000 acres of land be designated as additional wilderness on the White River National Forest (ROD Table - 11).

Factors considered in determining the need to recommend an inventoried roadless area as wilderness are outlined in FSH 1909.12.7.23b and are described in Appendix C of the FEIS. Red Table/Gypsum Creek and Assignment Ridge provide biological diversity to designated wilderness with additional acres of under-represented low elevation cover types. Other areas were recommended to provide additional wilderness recreation opportunities (social need), to improve boundary management of existing wilderness, and to complement adjacent BLM management strategies.

ROD Table - 11
Recommended Wilderness Areas and Acres under Alternative K

Area Name	County	Adjacent Wilderness	Acres
Red Table and Gypsum Creek	Eagle County	Not adjacent to any	49,800
Woods Lake	Eagle County	Holy Cross	4,700
Red Dirt	Eagle County	Flat Tops	100
Freeman Creek	Eagle County	Eagles Nest	300
Spraddle Creek	Eagle County	Eagles Nest	900
Ripple Creek Pass	Garfield County	Flat Tops	1,000
Dome Peak	Garfield County	Flat Tops	600
Sweetwater	Garfield County	Flat Tops	800
Treasure Mountain	Gunnison County	Raggeds	1,500
Assignment Ridge	Pitkin County	Not adjacent to any	11,800
Hunter	Pitkin County	Hunter-Frying Pan	1,100
Mormon Creek	Pitkin County	Holy Cross	3,000
North Independence "A"	Pitkin County	Hunter-Frying Pan	3,000
Acorn Creek	Summit County	Ptarmigan Peak	900
Ute Peak	Summit County	Ptarmigan Peak	2,000

This recommendation is a preliminary administrative recommendation that will receive further review and possible modification by the Chief of the Forest Service, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the President of the United States. The Congress has reserved the

authority to make final decisions on wilderness designation. Therefore, this wilderness recommendation is not appealable under the agency's administrative appeal procedures (FSM 1923.11).

Freeman Creek Recommended Wilderness Boundary. This decision modifies the boundary for the Freeman Creek recommended wilderness area on the Holy Cross District to accommodate road access to private land northwest of Piney Lake and adjacent to the Eagles Nest Wilderness. The modification removes approximately 40 acres from the 292 acres proposed as recommended wilderness. The area excluded from recommended wilderness will be managed similarly to the surrounding land in 1.31 MA prescription.

Single Unit Wilderness Management. To provide wilderness visitors consistent experiences across administrative boundaries, wilderness areas throughout the Region are managed under the concept of single unit management direction. The White River National Forest contains approximately 83% of the acres of the Flat Tops Wilderness and is the lead management unit. The Routt National Forest has the remaining acreage; its Land and Resource Management Plan was revised in 1998. As follow-up to this decision, I expect the Routt National Forest to review the wilderness direction in the Revised Forest Plan and to update the Flat Tops Wilderness management direction where conflict exists.

Similarly, the White River National Forest wilderness management direction will be reviewed when the Pike/San Isabel National Forest and the Grand Mesa/Uncompahgre/Gunnison National Forest Land and Resource Management Plans are revised. In wildernesses where the adjacent Forest is the lead management unit, the White River will update its wilderness management direction where conflict exists.

Colorado Army National Guard Operations. The Colorado Army National Guard, High-altitude ARNG Aviation Training Site operations on the White River National Forest provide unique and valuable high altitude and rough terrain aviation training opportunities for military pilots. This decision affirms the *Memorandum of Understanding* (MOU), dated April 3, 1987, between the Colorado Army National Guard, the BLM, and the Forest Service.

In addition, I intend that the Forest Supervisor initiate a review and amendment of the MOU to be completed by September of 2002. Aviation training activities conducted within wilderness and recommended wilderness shall be identified in the amendment to the MOU. As stipulated in the MOU, an annual review of operations will be completed to assure that "use of the airspace over the public lands is conducted so as to lessen impacts, if any, on the natural resource values of the land." The review shall include consideration of alternate locations outside of wilderness and recommended wilderness over NFS lands and lands administered by the BLM for training exercises. The Forest Service will work cooperatively with the Colorado Army National Guard and the BLM to identify locations outside of wilderness and recommended wilderness that meet aerial training needs and will modify the memorandum accordingly.

Roadless Inventory. We have updated our roadless inventory in this Revised Forest Plan. This information is included in Chapter 3 of the FEIS and in Appendix C of the FEIS and located in the map packet for the FEIS. This inventory will be used for all related

Revised Forest Plan implementation activities and replaces the 1979 RARE II¹⁶ inventory as the official White River National Forest roadless inventory.

Wild and Scenic Rivers. Congress designates wild and scenic rivers. The Forest Plan will manage 109 miles of stream for their wild and scenic values (ROD Table - 12). These values were identified in an eligibility study, the first phase of a two-phase process, of all rivers on the White River National Forest. The second phase of the wild and scenic river study addresses their suitability for inclusion into the Wild and Scenic River System. Upon completion of the second phase, final recommendations will be made to Congress. All action alternatives included the same 109 miles, with the exception of Alternative B, the modified no action alternative.

ROD Table - 12
Streams Found Eligible for Inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System under Alternative K

Name*	Length (miles)	Outstandingly Remarkable Values	Potential Classification
<i>South Fork of the White River</i>	25	recreation, scenery, geologic	wild and scenic
<i>Crystal River</i>	39	scenery, historic, recreational	wild, scenic, recreational
<i>Deep Creek</i>	13 ^{**} 2 ^{***}	geologic, scenic, recreational, and ecologic condition	wild, scenic, recreational
<i>Colorado River (Segment 1)</i>	4	geologic, scenic driving	recreational
<i>Colorado River (Segment 2)</i>	5	geologic, scenic driving	recreational
<i>Cross Creek (From the headwaters to the wilderness boundary)</i>	23	fisheries	wild

*Detailed descriptions of the stream segments can be found in Appendix F of the FEIS.

**Portions on public lands administered by White River National Forest

***Portions on public lands administered by BLM.

HOW THE DECISION WAS REACHED

In order to reach a final decision on which alternative to implement, I needed a way to understand the vast amount of information that had been generated throughout the planning process. I sought a method to integrate the three bases supporting my decision – scientific and technical analyses, the views of the public and our stakeholders, and legal mandates and policy direction. I chose to use a structured process that has been proven effective in helping to sort through and organize complex issues and the wealth of knowledge concerning them. Called “choosing by advantages”¹⁷, this process involved several steps:

First – The Leadership Team of the White River National Forest took each of the revision topics listed in the Description of the Alternatives Considered in Detail section of this ROD

¹⁶ The 1979 Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE) II EIS identified the administrative designation of roadless areas nationwide.

¹⁷ Suhr, Jim, The Choosing by Advantages Decisionmaking System, Quorum Books, 1999.

and divided them into twenty components, or subfactors. In addition, four subfactors were developed to reflect social and economic issues, as shown below:

- Biodiversity
 - Opportunities to Improve Forest Health
 - Canada Lynx Management
 - Potential Viable Populations of Colorado River Cutthroat Trout
 - Elk Habitat Management
 - Risk to Watershed Health
 - Maintaining Management Flexibility Through the Retention of Vacant Allotments
- Travel Management and Recreation Management
 - Summer Off-road Travel Opportunities for Motor Vehicles
 - Summer Motorized Recreation Capacity
 - Non-motorized Use Without Motorized Influence in Winter Outside of Wilderness
 - Winter Travel Opportunities for Motorized Vehicles
 - Estimated Dispersed Summer Theoretical Capacity
 - Estimated Skier Visits in Relation to Practical Annual Skier Capacity
- Roadless Areas and Special Areas
 - Natural Appearing Landscapes
 - Special Areas Protected for Biological/Zoological Purposes
 - Special Areas Protected for Public Use and Interpretation
 - Recommended Wilderness with Highest Capability Ranking
 - Wilderness Managed for Pristine Conditions
 - Recommended Wilderness in Lower Elevation Ecosystem Types
 - Roadless Areas Managed to Retain their Undeveloped/Unroaded Character
- Timber Suitability and Allowable Sale Quantity
 - Suitable Timber Lands
- Social and Economic
 - Winter Seasonal Employment
 - Summer Seasonal Employment
 - Demand for Affordable Housing/Rental Units
 - Fiscal Impact on Local Governments

Second – Attributes of each subfactor were determined and measured by the Interdisciplinary Team, e.g., for the subfactor Elk Habitat Management, the attribute was acres identified for critical summer and winter habitat (management area 5.41 – Deer and Elk Winter Range and management area 5.43 – Elk Habitat).

Third – For each subfactor, the advantage provided by each alternative was determined.

Fourth – Each advantage was assigned a relative level of importance and information was developed for each subfactor that illustrated the tradeoffs involved in seeking the maximum advantage for individual subfactors. This step involved in-depth discussions of each subfactor in light of the knowledge gained through the planning process and the professional expertise of the Leadership Team.

Two subfactors, Wilderness Managed for Pristine Conditions, and Fiscal Impact on Local Governments, were dropped at this stage of the process.

Fifth - By considering the advantages and the importance of each advantage by subfactor, and assessing the tradeoffs involved among them, I was able to identify one alternative that provided the greatest overall advantage. That alternative is "K", the Selected Alternative.

OTHER ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

Present Net Value

In addition to the subfactors identified above, economic efficiency analysis provides additional information that was considered in determining the selected alternative. The main criterion used in assessing economic efficiency is **present net value**, which is defined as the value of discounted benefits minus discounted costs. The FEIS, Chapter 3, Financial and Economic Efficiency section analyzes benefit and cost implications of the various alternatives. This analysis showed that Alternative K has the second highest present net value. Alternative B, the no action alternative, has the highest present net value.

Net Public Benefits

The importance of selecting the alternative that creates the highest net public benefit was emphasized in the decision making process. **Net public benefits** are defined as the overall value to the nation of all outputs and positive effects (benefits) minus all the associated Forest Service inputs and negative effects (costs) for producing those primary benefits, whether they can be quantitatively valued or not. Conceptually, it is helpful to think of net public benefits as the sum of the economic analysis plus the net value of non-priced benefits that have been discussed above.

With the exception of Alternative B, the no action alternative, all alternatives presented in the FEIS meet the purpose and need of the Revised Forest Plan and respond at some level to all the revision topics. Given this context, it was important to focus the decision making process on the kinds and amounts of benefits or advantages offered by each alternative. Information used in the process came from a variety of sources including agency analysis and public input. I placed a significant emphasis on integrating public comment on the DEIS into the decision-making process.

I have found that Alternative K does the best job at balancing the trade-offs for competing uses, values, costs, and outputs. The advantages of Alternative K outweigh the advantages of any other alternative. Therefore, Alternative K produces the highest net public benefits.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations require agencies to specify the alternative or alternatives which were considered to be environmentally preferable [40 CFR 1505.2(b)]. Forest Service policy (FSH 1909.15, Section 05) defines environmentally preferable as:

“An alternative that best meets the goals of Section 101 of NEPA....Ordinarily this is the alternative that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment and best protects, preserves, and enhances historical, cultural, and natural resources.”

Although the Act itself does not define the environmentally preferred alternative, it does suggest national environmental policy (42 USC, Section 4331, Sec. 101 (b)). That policy calls for the continuing responsibility of federal government to use all practicable means to improve and coordinate plans, functions, programs, and resources so that the nation may:

1. “Fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustees of the environment for succeeding generations
2. Assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings.
3. Attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences.
4. Preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our natural heritage and maintain, wherever possible, an environment which supports diversity and variety of individual choice.
5. Achieve a balance between population and resource use which will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life’s amenities.
6. Enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.”

Given these criteria, Alternative K has been identified as the environmentally preferred alternative. This ROD has discussed the decision process and the comparisons of the alternatives through a deliberative process. That process, described in the previous section, included the evaluation of net public benefit, subfactors, attributes and advantages.

It is my assessment that Alternative K best meets the goals and the substantive requirements of Section 101 of NEPA. Alternative K will ensure the future health of the land by providing appropriate opportunities for active management to work in concert with natural ecological processes. The maintenance of forest health and the physical resources is attained while securing the viability of plant and animal species into the future.

Opportunities for quality visitor experiences are plentiful. Alternative K provides for a wide range of beneficial uses, such as timber production, livestock grazing, downhill skiing, dispersed and developed recreation, and oil and gas development. Standards and guidelines within the Revised Forest Plan guard against undesirable and/or unintended outcomes.

Alternative K management area allocations preserve historic and natural aspects of the Forest and they provide for the expression of variety of individual preferences. I believe that Alternative K also achieves a balance between sustainable resource use and ecological sustainability that will best satisfy a variety of public needs and uses. This alternative provides for high quality, sustainable resource management. Enhancing forest health while providing sustainable resource production and recreation opportunities will continue to contribute to the vitality of local communities.

CHANGES BETWEEN DRAFT EIS AND FINAL EIS

Extensive public comment, shifts in regional and agency priorities, and new direction all contributed to the need for changes between the DEIS and FEIS. These changes are summarized below.

Public Input. Over 14,000 individual pieces of public input were received on the DEIS and Proposed Revised Forest Plan. Many offered recommendations or requests for changes or improvements in the environmental analysis; identified changes, improvements, or suggested new alternatives; or suggested modifications to the goals, objectives, standards and guidelines. Public input received on the DEIS and accompanying Proposed Revised Forest Plan also identified the need for several minor improvements to analysis and presentation of materials in the FEIS and Revised Forest Plan. As a result, editorial or other inconsistencies in the presentation of information in the DEIS were corrected for the FEIS.

Water. Public comment on the Proposed Revised Forest Plan identified the management of water and aquatic resources as a key concern to a variety of people and organizations. This high level of concern resulted in re-examination of water direction. A variety of factors, including public comment, the 2000 Forest Service GPRA Strategic Plan, national policies and internal agency review, influenced the revision of forestwide direction pertaining to water and aquatic resources. This revised direction focuses on achieving desired conditions and supporting ecological functions. Working collaboratively with interested parties to apply a variety of approaches to management of aquatic and stream-based resources are also emphasized. The revised direction conforms more closely to language in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), while also considering public concerns and internal agency guidance.

Species Viability. The scientific community and the Courts have recognized that NFMA does not create a precise standard for the diversity of plant and animal communities, and the viability of species populations. In determining whether alternative management scenarios will maintain viable populations, absolute certainty is not possible, and analysis must focus on assessing risks. Numerous factors, which vary according to the characteristics of individual species and particular ecosystems, are considered in evaluating risk.

On March 29, 2001, David Tenney, Acting Deputy Undersecretary for Natural Resources and the Environment of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, issued decisions regarding appeals of forest plans in Colorado. These decisions provide general guidance for the viability standard in the 1982 NFMA planning rule. The Forest Service then issued this general guidance to the Regional Foresters in a letter signed by Associate Deputy Chief Sally Collins (1920/1570 letter, June 17, 2001) which stated:

“Forest Service decisionmakers have considerable discretion regarding how to provide for viability, so long as relevant factors are not overlooked, no clear errors of judgment are made, a rationale is provided for using the approach taken, and the plain language of the regulations are met.

In keeping with the statutory requirements to provide for diversity “within the multiple-use objectives of a land management plan” (16 USC 1604 (g)(3)(B)) the amount and quality of scientific information should be commensurate with the land management activities projected in the forest plan and the viability risks associated with those activities.”

I find that the approach taken by the White River National Forest to analyze species viability, as described in the FEIS and its appendices, is consistent with this direction. It appropriately considers the viability risks associated with the land management activities projected in the Plan, and uses the amount and quality of scientific information that is relevant to those risks.

New Listings Under Endangered Species Act (ESA). As a result of the listing of the Canada lynx under the ESA on March 24, 2000, and corresponding regional efforts towards a strategy for managing lynx habitat, further analysis was completed for the FEIS. In response to the analysis, additional goals, objectives, standards and guidelines were developed and applied forest-wide for all alternatives in the Revised Forest Plan to ensure the Forest’s contribution to lynx recovery.

National Fire Plan. Concerns over wildfire have grown over the past several years. In response to these concerns, a variety of reports and plans were drafted on the subject beginning in 2000, after the draft forest planning documents were completed. The National Fire Plan was the result of these efforts. The National Fire Plan is a long-term investment that will help protect communities and natural resources, and most importantly, the lives of firefighters and the public. Some activities associated with the National Fire Plan depend on receiving adequate funding. Analysis in the FEIS was not based on potential funding or targets associated with National Fire Plan, due to uncertainty of year-to-year funding. If the levels of fuels treatment or prescribed fire vary significantly in the future, the Forest Plan will be reviewed to determine if amendments are needed. Analyses regarding fuels treatment and prescribed fire were examined, similar to all other activities in the FEIS, using historic budget levels. I recognize the importance and the value of the National Fire Plan and expect to implement activities associated with it during the duration of the Forest Plan.

Roadless. Direction in the National Roadless Area Conservation Rule was considered in the period following the issuance of the DEIS. However, the Forest Service was enjoined from applying this direction, subject to ongoing efforts to revise the rule. Chief Bosworth made clear, in his June 7, 2001, letter, that the agency is committed to protecting and managing roadless areas. The Revised Forest Plan addresses protection of those areas in a forest-wide guideline. Specifically, it directs management activities to “emphasize long-term maintenance of roadless characteristics...” Furthermore, management of these areas must comply with all national inventoried roadless direction.

Since the Forest Plan revision was substantially completed by January 12, 2002, I have extended the deadline for completing the Forest Roads Analysis to January 13, 2003. Until such time as the analysis is completed, compliance with Interim Directives 1920-2001-1 and 7710-2001-3 (December 14, 2001) will assure that roadless areas will be managed consistently and that the important environmental values associated with them will be protected.

Travel Management. Draft, site-specific, travel management plans accompanied each alternative presented in the DEIS. In response to public comment, to improve on the ground inventories, and to allow time to engage the public in a dialogue on the future of the transportation system on the Forest, we have separated the site-specific travel plan from the forest plan revision process. This resulted in changes to the analysis displayed in the draft that relied on site-specific data on the future of the transportation system. All comments offered by the public in response to the draft travel plans released with the DEIS will be carried forward into the travel management planning process.

Social and Economic Analysis. In response to public comment, the White River National Forest revisited the social and economic analysis presented in the DEIS. A series of stakeholder meetings were held to clarify and validate the significance of the social and economic attributes analyzed in the DEIS. Data provided from these meetings was used to capture the social and economic consequences of each alternative in a meaningful manner for the public. This resulted in further social analysis and a higher level of specificity with regard to community impacts, including a discussion in the FEIS about urbanization.

Formulation of Alternative K. Alternative K was developed in response to public comments received on the DEIS and the Proposed Revised Forest Plan that accompanied it, and to incorporate new Forest Service policies and direction. Many of the public's concerns focused on the need for an alternative that better emphasized various combinations of uses across the Forest.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS

I have considered the statutes governing management of the White River National Forest, and I believe that this decision represents the best possible approach to both harmonizing and reconciling the current statutory duties of the Forest Service.

Clean Air Standards

As discussed in the FEIS, Chapter 3: Part 1, Section 3 – Air Resources, all lands managed by the Forest are currently in attainment with National Ambient Air Quality Standards. Compliance with air quality statutes is directed in the Revised Forest Plan, Chapter 2: Section 1 – Physical, Air Resources.

Clean Water Act

The Revised Forest Plan contains direction to ensure all projects comply with the requirements of the Clean Water Act. This direction is found in the Revised Forest Plan, Chapter 2: Section 1, Water and Riparian Resources. A water assessment was completed to show the current condition of streams and watersheds on the Forest. This information is found in the FEIS Appendix J – Watershed Assessment.

The Rocky Mountain Region Watershed Conservation Practices Handbook, released on December 26, 1996 (amended on December 18, 2001, R2 amendment number 2509.25-2001-1), provides direction for protection of soil, aquatic and riparian systems. Implementation of the Revised Forest Plan is expected to contribute to protecting or restoring the physical, chemical and biological integrity of water of the United States in accordance with the Act.

National Historic Preservation Act

In accordance with a Memorandum of Understanding with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, Forest Plans are not undertakings under the National Historic Preservation Act. Consultation pursuant to Section 106 of the Act is not required at the Forest Plan level. As discussed in the Heritage Resource section of Chapter 3 of the FEIS, activities in the Revised Forest Plan will be in compliance with the Act. Conformance with the Act is directed in the Revised Forest Plan in Chapter 2: Section 4 – Social, Heritage Resources. Additional direction is provided in FSM 2360 as referenced in FEIS Chapter 3, Topic 5, Part 1 – Heritage Resources.

Endangered Species Act

A Biological Assessment was prepared to evaluate the potential effects of the proposed Revised Forest Plan on federally listed species and their habitat. The Biological Assessment concluded that implementation of Alternative K for the Forest Plan Revision would have “No Effect” on the Penland alpine fen mustard and the Uncompahgre fritillary butterfly; “May Effect, but not likely to adversely affect” the Southwestern willow flycatcher, bald eagle and the Mexican spotted owl; and “may affect, likely to adversely affect” the Canada lynx, Colorado pikeminnow, humpback chub, bonytail, and razorback sucker. The Biological Assessment was transmitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on September 19, 2001, with a request to initiate formal consultation.

In the March 19, 2002 Biological Opinion, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with the determinations of “No effect” on the Penland alpine fen mustard and the Uncompahgre fritillary butterfly, and “Not likely to adversely affect” the Southwestern willow flycatcher, bald eagle and the Mexican spotted owl.

Canada Lynx. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concluded that the action, as proposed in Alternative K for the Forest Plan Revision, will not jeopardize the continued existence of the Canada lynx; since no critical habitat has been designated, none will be affected. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined that implementation of Alternative K for the Forest Plan Revision will result in the incidental take of Canada lynx. To minimize incidental take, projects that implement the Revised Forest Plan will comply with the Reasonable and Prudent Measures and Terms and Conditions contained in the Biological Opinion. The Reasonable and Prudent Measures and Terms and Conditions applicable to Canada lynx are:

Reasonable and Prudent Measure 1: Measures shall be taken at the individual project level to eliminate or minimize adverse affects to Canada lynx and their habitat.

Term and Condition 1. To implement Reasonable and Prudent Measure 1: The Forest Service shall provide an annual report to the Service that summarizes, by Lynx Analysis Unit (LAU) the current habitat conditions as compared with the baseline in 2002.

Reasonable and Prudent Measure 2: Measures shall be taken across the Forest to improve habitat conditions for lynx prey, primarily the snowshoe hare and red squirrel.

Term and Condition 2. To implement Reasonable and Prudent Measure 2: The Forest Service shall, within lynx habitat described in the Colorado lynx habitat mapping as “other” lynx habitat, implement techniques to improve habitat conditions for

showshoe hare and red squirrel. This can be accomplished through the incorporation of fire, timber management, or other vegetation management practices. The purpose is to improve winter foraging opportunities for lynx, both spatially and temporally. To accomplish the term and condition, where projects result in a permanent conversion of winter foraging habitat (will continue to be managed in unsuitable condition through the life of the Forest Plan), a project component shall be included to treat “other” lynx habitat equal to or greater than the number of acres being affected, within the same or, with approval of the Service, and adjacent LAU. Focus of these activities should be within mature, mesic lodgepole pine stands that currently provide lower quality winter foraging habitat and move it towards higher quality winter forage habitat conditions.

Reasonable and Prudent Measure 3. Determine baseline snow compaction conditions, to include permitted routes, snowmobile play areas, and frequent use areas for all winter activities.

Term and Condition 3: To implement Reasonable and Prudent Measure 3: The Forest Service shall complete snow compaction mapping within one year of Forest Plan approval. This information will be used in the development of appropriate use levels and location of use in the Travel Management Plan, which shall be initiated within one year of Forest Plan approval.

Endangered Fishes. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also determined that the action, as proposed in Alternative K for the Forest Plan Revision, will not jeopardize the continued existence of the Colorado pikeminnow, humpback chub, bonytail, and razorback sucker, or result in the destruction or adverse modification of their critical habitat, within the Colorado River Basin above the Gunnison River. Through continuation of existing uses and potential new uses, the proposed action will jeopardize the continued existence of the Colorado pikeminnow, humpback chub, bonytail, and razorback sucker, and result in the destruction or adverse modification of their critical habitat, within the White River drainage. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined that sufficient progress has been achieved under the Recovery Program so that it can serve as the reasonable and prudent alternative to avoid the likelihood of jeopardy to the endangered fishes in the White River drainage. The Reasonable and Prudent Measure and Term and Condition applicable to Colorado pikeminnow, humpback chub, bonytail, and razorback sucker are:

Reasonable and Prudent Measure 4: Measures shall be taken to minimize the impacts of water depletions on the endangered fishes which occur within the Colorado and White River drainage.

Term and Condition 4: To implement Reasonable and Prudent Measure 4: Conduct consultation for projects where water depletions will result, in the appropriate manner (Colorado River, White River). Depletions in the Colorado River may fall under the umbrella of the Colorado River Programmatic Biological Opinion Number ES/GJ-6-CO-99-F-033. Analysis of projects will determine if this is the case and appropriate action will be taken, as directed by that opinion. Depletions that occur in the White River do not fall under the umbrella of the Colorado River programmatic biological opinion, and therefore must undergo formal consultation for individual projects.

Conservation Recommendations that were provided in the Biological Opinion will be considered during project planning. Standards protecting T&E Species can be found in the Revised Forest Plan, Chapter 2, Section 2, Proposed, Threatened and Endangered Species and Sensitive Species.

MITIGATION AND MONITORING

The Forest Service uses data from the monitoring program in Chapter 4 of the Revised Forest Plan to update and maintain baseline inventory data, to assess progress towards meeting plan goals and objectives, to validate effectiveness of guidance provided in the plan, and to assess the need for amending or revising the plan. A monitoring implementation strategy has been prepared which provides specific information on each item.

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of this ROD will occur 30 calendar days after the legal notice of this decision is published in the Federal Register [36 CFR 219.10 c(1)].

APPLICATION TO CONTRACTS, PERMITS AND SPECIAL USE AUTHORIZATIONS

The NFMA requires that “permits, contracts, and other instruments for use and occupancy” of NFS lands be “consistent” with the Forest Plan [16 U.S.C. 1604(i)]. In the Revised Forest Plan context, NFMA specifically conditions this requirement in three ways:

- 1) These documents must be revised only “when necessary;”
- 2) These documents must be revised as “soon as practicable;”
- 3) Any revisions are “subject to valid existing rights.”

Permits, contracts and other authorizations which are determined by the responsible official to be consistent with this decision, or which are adjusted to be consistent may proceed. This language allows the decision maker a great deal of discretion.

Most timber sale decisions are implemented through a three-year contract. While a timber sale contract is a valid existing right, the terms of the contract allow modification. Therefore, modification of a timber contract under its terms would not violate the “valid existing right” provision. Nevertheless, I have decided not to modify any existing timber sale contracts solely due to the Revised Forest Plan. As stated earlier, it is assumed that these contracts will be executed according to their terms. Finally, existing timber contracts will, in most cases, have been completed within three years. The decision is left to the Forest Supervisor to determine whether to modify decisions authorizing timber sales not currently under contract.

Other use and occupancy agreements are for substantially longer term than timber contracts. For example, grazing permits are generally issued for a 10-year term. These permits can be cancelled in whole or in part or otherwise modified, at any time during the term to conform with needed changes brought about by law, regulation, executive order, allotment management plans and land management planning. Changes in grazing permits may be made to achieve objectives identified in forest plans and/or NEPA analysis and decisions.

Modifications to grazing permits can be made by a letter, issuance of a new Term Grazing Permit, or a standard modification form. In the standard modification form, the authorizing officer may include as terms and conditions of the grazing permit those applicable standards and guidelines contained in the Forest Plan and/or NEPA analysis and decision that specify appropriate management requirements. The allotment management plans and annual operating instructions are incorporated as part of the term grazing permit.

It is my intention to see grazing permits brought into compliance with the Revised Forest Plan in a two-step process:

1. Upon approval of the Revised Forest Plan, all grazing permits will be modified, either with a Standard Modification Form or in the Annual Operating Instructions, as appropriate to include applicable direction. This includes, but may not be limited to issues of forage utilization and water and riparian resources.
2. When Allotment Management Plan NEPA documentation is completed per NEPA and the Rescission Act [Public Law 104-19, Section 504; July 27, 1995] schedule, all other applicable Revised Forest Plan direction will be incorporated into the Grazing Permit and/or Allotment Management Plan which is a part of the permit.

I find that applying the Revised Forest Plan's standards and guidelines through this process will meet the "as soon as practicable" NFMA provision.

Other classes of "use and occupancy" agreements will be reviewed to determine whether or when the Forest Supervisor should exercise discretion to bring them into compliance with the Revised Forest Plan. Some decisions recently made but not yet implemented, will be reviewed, adjusted and implemented to meet the direction found in the Revised Forest Plan. Specifically this applies, on a case-by-case basis, to ski area development projects. I expect that the decision maker for such projects will review the decisions to determine if adjustments need to be made.

The decision maker has the discretion, on a case-by-case basis, to modify pre-existing authorizations to bring them into compliance with the Revised Forest Plan standards and guidelines. I find that the statutory criteria of "as soon as practicable" and excepting "valid existing rights" are useful in exercising that discretion.

SKI AREA PERMITS

It is my intent that after the Forest Plan decision is implemented, each ski area permit will be amended to make the permit boundary the same as the 8.25 management area boundary. These modifications are required by the ski area permit itself which states (FS-2700-5b IH1): "The terms and conditions of this authorization shall be subject to revision to reflect changing times and conditions so that land use allocation decisions made as a result of revision to Forest Land and Resource Management Plan may be incorporated."

The idea of equating the permit boundary and the management area boundary was mapped as a feature of Alternative D in the Draft EIS, and its environmental effects were disclosed in that document. This idea was carried forward into Alternative K as modified. This action does not authorize new facilities or activities. Amending the ski area permits to reflect the management area 8.25 boundaries does not, in any instance, constitute authorization for use or development.

VACANT GRAZING ALLOTMENT DECISION

The environmental effects of management alternatives for vacant domestic grazing allotments were analyzed in the FEIS and prepared for the Revised Forest Plan. A separate decision document will be prepared that will identify specific vacant allotments that will be closed, and specific vacant allotments that will be partially retained. This decision will be made approximately three months after the release of the Forest Plan decision. The Forest Supervisor will make this decision.

TRAVEL MANAGEMENT

Management area allocations in this decision determine allowable uses and access to areas of the Forest for motorized vehicles. Although the Forest will soon begin a travel management process, certain changes to the current travel system are necessary to bring the current travel map into compliance with the Revised Forest Plan. I believe the changes to current use are important to protect resources in areas recommended for wilderness designation and to eliminate conflicts with the designation of areas for backcountry non-motorized recreation. While certain kinds of use are restricted, this change, in itself, does not close any designated Forest roads or trails to all uses. Some specific roads and trails, will, however, be closed to motorized uses. These roads and trails will not be obliterated, however use on these roads and trails may be closed to motorized use. This is a change from motorized use to non-motorized use (foot and horse and/or mountain bikes).

The use of the primary forest roads (maintenance levels 3, 4 and 5) will not be changed by this decision. Any needed changes will be determined by a separate analysis, which will include public input. It is important to note that any current rights-of-way and agreements for private land access will remain in place. In addition, roads under other jurisdictions such as county and state roads shall continue to function as currently designated.

Portions of the following roads and trails (ROD Table - 13) use designations will be changed in a Travel Order to be in compliance with the management area prescriptions in this Revised Forest Plan. The Travel Order will be signed after this ROD is approved. Travel maps at the Forest and District level will be revised to reflect these changes at the earliest possible date. The Travel Order, signed by the Forest Supervisor, will define specific miles and the allowable uses on the roads and trails in the following table. All seasonal restrictions, special orders, private access rights, special use permits, and legal statutes currently in use will continue to be applicable.

The Travel Management Plan will expand this table to include the level and types of use on all roads and trails on the White River National Forest. Activities in the Travel Management Plan are site-specific and will require analysis and disclosure of effects under NEPA. These site-specific analyses will be done during implementation of the Revised Forest Plan. The management area prescriptions defined in the Revised Forest Plan, and the standards defining the type of use allowed or restrictions within these prescriptions will be followed in the Travel Management Plan. Work on the Travel Management Plan will be initiated upon approval of this ROD.

Nothing in the following restrictions shall be construed as prohibiting the use of a wheelchair, by a person whose disability requires use of a wheelchair, in any area open to

public foot travel. For the purposes of this statement the term wheelchair means a device designed solely for use by a mobility-impaired person for locomotion, which is suitable for use in an indoor pedestrian area.

ROD Table - 13

Changes to the Forest Road and Trail Use Designations under Alternative K*

System	Route No.	Name	District
Management Area 1.2: Recommended for Wilderness, Closed to Motorized and Mechanized Year-round			
FDT	1803.1	Chinese Wall	Blanco
FDT	1811.1	Picket Pin Lily Pond	Blanco
FDT	1839.1	Nellies	Eagle
FDT	1862.1	White Creek	Eagle
FDT	1863.1	Sundell	Eagle
FDT	1863.1A	Sourdough Lake	Eagle
FDT	1863.2B	Muckey Lake	Eagle
FDT	1870.1	Mount Thomas	Eagle
FDT	1871.1	Antones	Eagle
FDT	1871.1C	Antones Lakes	Eagle
FDT	1873.1	Ironedge	Eagle
FDT	1874.1	Cherry Ponds	Eagle
FDT	1886.1	East Meadow Creek	Holy Cross
FDT	1890.1	Lower Piney Trail	Holy Cross
FDT	1912.1	Red Hill	Sopris
FDT	1914W.1	Reudi Creek	Sopris
FDT	1917.1	Tellurium Lake	Sopris
FDT	1945.1	Last Chance	Sopris
FDT	1949.1	Perham Creek	Sopris
FDT	2067.1	Johnny Meyers	Eagle
FDT	2190.1M	Warren Lakes	Aspen
FDT	2224.1	Lost Lake	Eagle
NFSR	410.1	Meadow Creek	Holy Cross
NFSR	412.1W		Eagle
NFSR	417.1	Leeman Gulch	Eagle
NFSR	425.1	Red Creek	Eagle
NFSR	425.1B	Muckey Lake	Eagle
NFSR	457.1	Antones Creek	Eagle
NFSR	514.1	Red Table	Eagle
NFSR	536.1	Freeman Road	Sopris
FDT	69.1	Ptarmigan	Dillon
FDT	71.1	Acorn Creek	Dillon
Management Area 1.31: Back-country Recreation, Closed to Motorized Year-round			
FDT	116.1	Anderson Lake	Aspen
NFSR	121.2A	Lindley Cabin	Aspen
NFSR	1219.1	Ten Mile Canyon	Dillon
NFSR	132.1	Houston Draw	Aspen
NFSR	1761.1	Elliot Creek	Dillon

System	Route No.	Name	District
NFSR	1761.1A	Guthrie Gulch	Dillon
FDT	1820.1	Big Ridge	Blanco
FDT	1890.1	Lower Piney Trail	Holy Cross
FDT	1958.1	Mt Sopris	Sopris
FDT	1969.1	Anthracite Pass	Sopris
FDT	1991.1	Petroleum Lake	Aspen
FDT	1991.1A	Anderson Lake	Aspen
FDT	2083.1	Yule Pass	Sopris
FDT	2111.1	Buffehr Creek	Holy Cross
NFSR	260.1	Peru Creek	Dillon
NFSR	260.2A	Peruvian Mine	Dillon
NFSR	260.2B	Horseshoe Basin	Dillon
NFSR	260.2C	Arapaho	Dillon
FDT	38.1	Miners Creek	Dillon
FDT	40.1	Bakers Tank	Dillon
NFSR	408.1B	Bear Creek	Sopris
FDT	41.1	Corral Creek	Dillon
NFSR	569.1	Little French Gulch	Dillon
NFSR	611.1	Pennsylvania Creek	Dillon
FDT	611.3A	Pennsylvania Creek	Dillon
NFSR	706.1	Perterson Creek	Holy Cross
NFSR	710.1D	Mill Creek Spur D	Holy Cross
NFSR	710.1F	Mill Creek Spur 1f	Holy Cross
NFSR	710.1G	Mill Creek Spur 1g	Holy Cross
NFSR	710.1H	Mill Creek Spur 1h	Holy Cross
NFSR	787.1	Buffehr	Holy Cross
NFSR	848W.1	Hoosier Ridge	Dillon
Management Area 1.32: Back-country Recreation, Limited Winter Motorized, Closed to Summer Motorized			
NFSR	731.1	Taylor Gulch	Holy Cross
NFSR	731.1E	Taylor Hill	Holy Cross
NFSR	754.1	Ski Cooper	Holy Cross
Management Area 1.5: Wild Rivers-designated and eligible, Closed to Motorized Year-round			
FDT	1852.1	Johnson Pasture	Eagle
Management Area 3.32: Backcountry Non-motorized with Winter Motorized, Closed to Summer Motorized			
FDT	2160.5	Battlement Trail	Rifle

** All or portions of the roads and trails which fall within the identified management area prescriptions*

AMENDMENT

All activities, many of which are interdependent, may be affected by annual budgets. However, the goals, objectives, standards and guidelines, management area prescriptions, and monitoring requirements described in the Revised Forest Plan may not change unless

the Forest Plan is amended. The Forest Plan will be amended or revised to adjust to changing circumstances.

An important purpose of a Forest Plan is to communicate the long-term desires of forest management and thereby provide some stability to local and national interests. At the same time, new information and changing conditions may require updates to the Forest Plan. These will be accomplished with public involvement through the amendment or revision process as described in 36 CFR 219.10.

APPEAL REVIEW OR APPEAL OPPORTUNITIES

This decision is subject to administrative review pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Any appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9, and be filed in duplicate with the Chief within 90 days of the published legal notice. Appeals should be sent to the following address:

**Chief, USDA Forest Service
14th & Independence S.W. 201 14th Street
Washington, DC 20250**

Any notice of appeal must include at a minimum:

- A statement identifying the document as a Notice of Appeal filed pursuant to 36 CFR Part 217.
- The name, address and telephone number of the appellant.
- Identification of the document in which the decision is contained, by title and subject, date of the decision, and name and title of the Deciding Officer.
- Identification of the specific portion of the decision to which the appeal is being made.
- The reason(s) for appeal, including issues of fact, law, regulation, or policy.
- Identification of the specific change(s) in the decision that the appellant seeks.

For questions concerning the appeal process, contact:

**USDA Forest Service
Attn: Ecosystem Management Staff
P.O. Box 96090
Washington, DC 20090-6090
(202) 205-1066**

For questions concerning the Revised Forest Plan, contact:

**Martha Ketelle, Forest Supervisor
White River National Forest
900 Grand Avenue
PO Box 948
Glenwood Springs, CO 81602-0948**

CONCLUSION

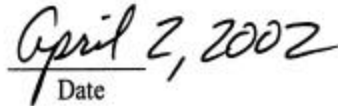
I am pleased to announce my decision and bring this phase of forest planning to completion. The White River National Forest is now in a position to embark on a new era of federal land management, built on a strong foundation of public collaboration and state-of-the-art management direction.

As we move forward we will carefully monitor our activities, the condition of the land, the goods and services produced, and the effectiveness of the resource protection measures included in the Revised Forest Plan. I anticipate that implementation of the plan will be conducted in the same spirit of partnership that has characterized this revision process.

Signature



Rick D. Cables
Regional Forester
Rocky Mountain Region



Date